BOOTH AND THE SPIRIT OF LINCOLN

BERNIE BABCOCK

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BOOTH AND THE SPIRIT OF LINCOLN

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A STORY OF A LIVING DEAD MAN

BY

BERNIE BABCOCK

AUTHOR OF

THE SOUL OF ANN RUTLEDGE,
THE SOUL OF ABE LINCOLN, Etc.

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IN APPRECIATION

This story, BOOTH AND THE SPIRIT OF LINCOLN, is founded on documentary evidence, a great portion of which was gathered by Finis L. Bates (deceased), early-day friend of John St. Helen, evidence now in possession of his wife, Mrs. Finis L. Bates, 1234 Harbert Avenue, Memphis, Tenn.

This evidential matter I have examined with great care, using a strong magnifying glass over some of the signatures to detect the fraud charged by certain writers, who claim to believe Booth was shot in the Garrett barn.

For the opportunity of this rigid examination I wish to thank Mrs. Bates and to advise readers of this story who may wish copies of Mr. Bates' book *The Escape and Suicide of John Wilkes Booth,* same containing original matter above referred to, that Mrs. Bates has a few copies. Mr. Bates spent $50,000 accumulating the evidence presented in this book and in later affidavits. The book, now out of print, is invaluable to those desiring first-hand evidence on this disputed case.

I also wish to thank Miss Beatrice Prawl, former librarian, city of Little Rock, Arkansas, for information furnished in research work on this subject, and to others who directed the author to subject matter or supplied clippings for a work that has taken some years to complete.

CHARACTERS AND INFLUENCES

MAJOR

A Living Dead Man.....*John Wilkes Booth*

A Ghost.....*The Spirit of Abraham Lincoln*

A Mysterious Voice A Fragrant Memory

A Mother's Love

MINOR

Mrs. Temple.....*Friend of John Wilkes Booth*

Mrs. Mary Surratt.....*Boarding House Keeper*

John Surratt.....*Son of Mrs. Surratt*

Anna Surratt.....*Daughter of Mrs. Surratt*

Louis Weichmann.....*Inmate of Surratt Home*

Dr. Mudd.....*Physician of Bryantown, Md.*

"Johnnie".....*A Hired Man*

Col. Coxe.....*Maryland Planter*

Sojer Tom Willsin.....*Mountaineer Preacher*

Big Eagle.....*Cherokee Chief*

I. Treadkel.....*Caravan Overseer*

"Curry" Chicken.....*Seasoned Seaman*

Ram Surosh.....*A Yohgi*

A Woman.....*Daughter of the Game*

Father Soria.....*A Priest*

Donna Luisa.....*A Spanish Belle*

Don Juan Valento.....*Matadore*

Finis L. Bates.....*Lawyer*

Gen. Albert Pike.....*Soldier, Poet, Lawyer, Mason*

Mrs. Harper.....*Minister's Wife*

Charlie Brown.....*Hotel Clerk*

Herold, Atzerodt, Payne, accomplices of Booth; others.

DISPOSITION OF THE BODY OF JOHN WILKES BOOTH

He (John Wilkes Booth) was buried near the old jail and a battery of artillery drawn over his grave to obliterate all trace of it.

GEN. DAVID D. DANA.

John Wilkes Booth was buried under a brick pavement in a room of the old penitentiary building of Washington.

GEN. LEW WALLACE.

The remains of Booth were carried on a gunboat about ten miles down the Potomac when the body was sunk in the river.

CAPT. E. W. HILLARD.

The body of Booth was placed on a boat by Capt. Baker and his nephew, a Lieutenant in the New York Seventy-first Volunteers, carried to an island twenty-seven miles from Washington and secretly buried there.

COL. WM. P. WOOD.

* * * * *

It is claimed, and history discloses, that none of the pursuing party under Lieut. Baker, nor even he himself, knew either Booth or Herold, but they were furnished photographs of them for their identification, while at the inquest the body was not identified by the picture of Booth, so far as we are informed, though it was then and there in the possession of Lieut. Baker. There was no further proof of the identity of the body as that of Booth except the pictures of Booth's relatives, the letters, etc., offered by Conger (found on body) and this was solely relied on. If the body had been that of Booth, positive identification

could have been had by comparison with his pictures, while hundreds, yea thousands of people living in Washington could have been called on to positively identify the dead body of Booth under oath. There were so many who knew him personally and others who had seen him on the stage that it would have been almost as easy to have identified the body of John Wilkes Booth as that of President Lincoln whom he had assassinated.

Escape and Suicide of Booth by Finis L. Bates, p. 157.

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BOOTH AND THE SPIRIT OF LINCOLN

CHAPTER I

THE DARLING OF THE GODS

"And the Greek god who looks on the dance with flaming eyes but remains like a statue—who is he?"

"You do not know him?"

"It seems I do—and yet—if I have seen him, where has it been?"

"On the stage most likely."

"The stage? You do not mean—why of course! It is John Wilkes."

"Yes. John Wilkes Booth, the handsomest and most fascinating man that ever walked the streets of Washington."

"And such an actor! More than once I have been thrilled by the drawing of his sword. But never have I seen such fire in his eyes."

"His stage fire is that of art, consummate, but art. This is the fire of passion whipped high."

"There must be a woman."

"Follow his eyes. They do not leave her."

The scene was in the ball room of the National Hotel in Washington during the last days of the Civil War. There was the sound of revelry by night that comes of music and laughter, of gay talk and the rhythmic tapping of slippered feet upon smooth floors. For here were gathered the wealthy, the beautiful, the talented and the brave of the land who, even though near-by battle fields were being reddened with fresh blood, danced on apparently as care-

free as the famous fiddler of Rome who made music for devouring flames.

Living at the National during this period were Senator and Mrs. Hale with their daughter Bessie and Mr. and Mrs. Temple with Mrs. Temple's greatly admired young friend John Wilkes, youngest brother of the famous Booth family of actors.

It was Mrs. Temple who, on the night of the dance where the actor was an angry on-looker, pointed him out to a guest from New Orleans.

"She must be a beauty," the guest observed watching the actor.

"You are right—one of the loveliest women God ever put breath in. She is on the far side of the ball room. When she comes back I will point her out if her enraged lover's eyes do not direct you to her. Did you ever see anyone angrier? He has gone white. His gleaming teeth press hard against his lips. Jealousy! He is consumed with it!"

"He is a picture worth studying. You call him the 'darling of the gods.' I agree that if perfection of body and beauty of intelligence make a man such, you have not misnamed him. He looks the part without a blemish."

Mrs. Temple laughed well pleased as she said, "He is without a blemish except a few scars that have come of his profession—three to be exact. Do you notice how he holds his cane with his thumb tucked under? That thumb was twisted out of place as the actor made an effort to shift some scenery. It will never be straight again. If you were closer you would notice that his right eye brow is higher than the other—arched up in the middle. This came of a sword cut. As 'Richard,' John Wilkes was practicing with the handsome McCullom who was 'Richmond.' Booth was urging him to strike hot and fast. In his excitement—John Wilkes always gets terribly excited while practicing and makes others feel the same way—in his

excitement McCullom forgot to count sword strokes and dealt an extra and terrible blow. Blood and excitement followed. The wound was stitched and healed. The scar is deep and will be a lifetime reminder of a story worth hearing in detail. Clara Morris who was present and holding his watch when the thrust all but opened Booth's head, tells it better than he does."

"And the third scar."

"Oh yes—the third. You would have to stand close and look for it. About a year ago he began to be troubled with a slight growth on the back of his neck—a little to one side. He consulted a physician who told him it was a tumor which must be cut out and he must keep quiet in bed until the place was entirely healed. This John Wilkes refused to do. He did promise, however, to be careful and the small growth was removed. But before it had entirely healed he had a love scene with Miss Charlotte Cushman in which she threw herself into his arms and clung to him in wild abandon. So much force was thrown into the act the wound on poor John's neck was pulled open and he had to go back for more stitches. The physician said he would have an ugly scar for a long time. But it healed months ago and the scar amounts to little—just a lasting memory mark of a famous hug." And Mrs. Temple laughed again.

"I have often wondered about the practice of the actor's art as I have watched the swing of the body and the thrust of swords on the stage. It looks real enough."

"It is real with John Wilkes. His body seems made for it—lithe—athletic. His leaps in Macbeth are natural. His sword play in Richard is not artificial, while ghosts—have you seen him in Hamlet? Have you watched him closely as he meets his father's ghost? I almost believe that ghost is real to him. We have talked of it—Bessie Hale and I. We talk of him much. My admiration for the boy is boundless and Bessie Hale—the girl adores him."

"Is this the lady he is following with those flaming dark eyes—that 'loveliest woman God ever put breath in'?"

"Yes, Bessie Hale, and a handsomer pair of lovers you never saw. I am as interested in their affair as if they were my own. It was I who brought them together. John Wilkes is a ladies' man from the top of his raven-crowned head to the tip of his aristocratic foot. They go wild about him—young and old. The motion of his body—the light in his eyes—the vibrations of his voice—these—stir up a woman. I knew when the eyes of Bessie Hale fell on John and the eyes of John met those of the girl that I had assured Cupid a good start. Nor was he slow in taking advantage of the situation. Nothing ever moves slowly in which John Wilkes is concerned . . . I shall not forget the first time she saw him in Hamlet. If John Wilkes had been less of an artist I should have watched the girl as she watched the melancholy Dane. She forgot herself even as he had forgotten himself in his superb acting."

"He is wonderful."

"Yes—wonderful! And think how young he is—scarce twenty-six. What will he be when he is as old as his brother, the great Edwin? What will he be if he lives to the age of his actor-father Junius Brutus? For him the stars hold a roseate fate."

"And Cupid got in his good work?"

"They are engaged but their course of love has had its rough currents. In the first place Senator Hale raised and still raises strong objections to the marriage of his daughter with an actor. On the stage an actor is all right. But for a husband? He says 'No.' It is not his profession, however, that is the only objection. Senator Hale is a loyal Union man. John Wilkes is openly for Secession, having parted company with his entire family on this point,

for the rest of them are loyal to the Union. Also, John Wilkes parted company with the religion of his fathers and joined the Roman Catholic Church. To Senator Hale, strongly Puritan, this is another objection. Then too, John Wilkes does not like President Lincoln while Senator Hale not only has unlimited faith in the President but is bound to him by peculiarly close ties of friendship."

"The fact that your ardent lover has no admiration for Lincoln would be rather a recommendation than a fault if I were judge."

"Quite naturally. We do not expect anything else from native Southerners. Yet it is true that those who know the President least, hate him most. If you could only know him as some of us here do."

"Is a personal acquaintance necessary to judge a man's character? Must a man talk face to face with him to form opinions? I am of the opinion that in spite of all the stories told by his followers of his tender and sympathetic heart, he is the coldest hearted man that ever led a people into bloody warfare. Why do I think this? Look about you. It is a ball room filled with a gay crowd; no gayer ever gathered to make merry. Lights, music, silks, laces, jewels, perfume, the glitter of buttons and braid on officers' coats, small talk, laughing, the beating of joy-heated hearts one against another in the intoxication of the dance—all this while men are being mangled and torn and heaped up on nearby battle fields. And to this sort of thing the Commander-in-Chief of your armies comes. He walks laughing among you as his guns do their deadly work. He shakes hands and tells stories while those for whose death he is responsible, groan and plead for water and breathe out their last agony. How can he do it if his heart is human?"

"What an arraignment. If you could only know—only know what torture it is for him to attend these balls.

Less than a week ago he had been especially invited and was expected to be present at a gay affair. It had been weeks since he had appeared at a social function. He promised he would attend. An hour before the time he came to the hotel to my parlor. The news from near battle fields was discouraging. The President himself seemed to be disheartened. I have never seen his sad face sadder than on this night. He spoke of the reverses of warfare—of the hundreds of noble men who were giving their lives for the preservation of the Union, of the hundreds of mothers whose hearts were dripping blood because of their losses. 'Mrs. Temple,' he said, with something like a smothered choking of the throat, 'it seem like mockery—these gay affairs while our country is shadowed by the black pall of warfare, brother against brother. It is hard for me to move among the people who seem so care-free, almost heartless. Yet they are not heartless and they are my people—I am their President as well as the President of the boys on the battle fields and their mothers. It is a duty I must perform.' For nearly an hour that evening he sat alone in my parlor his face bent into his big hands. When we were ready to go I spoke to him. Lifting his face he moved his fingers slowly down over the deep lines of his cheeks as if trying to brush away or smooth something, arose and was ready. Half an hour later I heard him laughing heartily. 'Can this be the same man?' I asked myself."

"You too have been drawn into the net," Mrs. Temple's guest answered, smiling at the enthusiasm of her defense. "The spell the man casts is inexplicable to me unless it is that the campaign stories of him have been taken seriously. To come from a windowless cabin in the wild woods to the White House is an achievement—a romance, and who is impervious to romance? The story of his love for his mother—

to make it more impressive, a stepmother, is sentiment and who is there with heart so hard it will not respond to sentiment when the mother chord is played upon?"

"Such prejudice! If I were to tell you of the love of John Wilkes for his mother—if I were to tell you the boy is passionately devoted to her, would you believe it? Would you believe that he thinks of her much, writes to her, visits her and on his shrine sets her above all women—except of course Bessie Hale?"

"Yes. I would believe it. But think what a mother and look at the son. Love and admiration seem to belong to him. Culture makes a background for love. Maryland—Baltimore, my dear Mrs. Temple, is different from the wolf-infested wilds where your Lincoln came from originally and his much-advertised mother lived. But look at Booth! He clutches his cane tighter! His teeth set harder against his lip, and his eyes—cold fingers would warm in their blaze!"

"She is moving closer to him—she will pass him in a moment if he holds together for the ordeal. See—there she is with that young army officer."

"Which one?"

"The dress of white lace garlanded with pink roses—see? A rope of roses crosses her shoulder and hangs over her skirt."

"I see."

"What do you think of her?"

"She is lovely—charming. And who is the fortunate young officer whose arms enfold her?"

"That? That is Bob Lincoln, the President's son, Captain Robert Lincoln. Isn't he nice looking?"

"As far as looks go he will pass. But he does not look like his father."

"You are safe in conceding that he is nice looking,"

Mrs. Temple laughed, "for he is like his mother's family and some of the best blood of Old Kentucky runs in her veins."

"I do not blame the young actor for looking on with jealous eyes. The Captain is in love with the girl himself."

"You speak no secret. He is madly in love with her. But I wish she were dancing with John Wilkes. This will result in a quarrel. Once before it happened the same way. John had to be at rehearsal and was late getting into the ball. Bessie thought she would be through her last dance with Bob Lincoln before he came in. If he did not know how much in love the President's son is with the girl he might not have been so angry. But jealousy got the better of him and in his anger he said things to Bessie that she resented. The quarrel grew serious and for days he did not come near her nor send a message. She was actually sick over it. Then they got together, kissed, made up, kissed again and started out fresh. Now it is happening again. She knew he was to be at Ford's Theatre rehearsing and thought, as she did before, she would enjoy a dance before he came in. He has come a little earlier than expected. You see how he is affected and I do not suppose she knows he is in the room."

The strains of a dreamy waltz were having a subduing effect on the dancers. There were more whispered words than spoken. Laughter was soft and half breathed out across bare shoulders and into understanding eyes and the contact of bodies throbbing in harmony with the vibration of veiled passion was closer if more quiet. Moving slowly to the dreamy strains, Captain Robert Lincoln and Bessie Hale came close to John Wilkes Booth. As they passed him the fire that had shone in his eyes seemed to vitalize him from head to foot.

"Your Greek statue—your darling of the gods, has

become alive," Mrs. Temple's guest said as the young actor turned quickly from the scene.

"He is leaving," she said. "Perhaps as he passes I can get in a word for Bessie."

The next moment the young actor, the fire in his eyes still blazing, paused before Mrs. Temple. He spoke under stress of high feeling.

"Her people and his will take her from me yet—have taken her, for *I am done.* Tell her so—tell her to take her blue-coated son of a nigger-loving President. Tell her to *take him!*"

"But John—John! She does not want him. Bessie Hale is not in love with Bob Lincoln. It is you she loves—*you!* John," and Mrs. Temple laid a restraining hand on the excited young man's arm.

"Let me go," he whispered hoarsely shaking off the hand. "Let me go or I will *kill* him!"

"Oh dear!" sighed Mrs. Temple as she watched his slender form in its nervously quick exit. "I wish Bessie had not done it. I wish the Hales could see that an artist like John Wilkes would be as good a match for their daughter as the son of a President—even Mr. Lincoln. Don't you think so?"

"Between the actor, John Wilkes Booth with his talent —his future, and a young man who will be known as the son of a President, if posterity remembers him at all, if love were eliminated entirely, who would not choose the actor with his personality—his genius—his future, inevitably great if his life is spared?"

"Exactly the way I feel. And exactly the way Bessie Hale feels when her reason can calculate without being stormed by her love."

"You know the old saying about the course of true love."

"Yes, but it is when lovers go insanely jealous they wreck their chances of happy reconciliations by rushing out and marrying another than their love. John Wilkes could marry any one of a dozen young women he knows tomorrow. Before God I hope he does not do anything rash. But here comes Bessie. She will ask me to watch for John Wilkes. She expects to dance with him. She dressed especially to please his artistic eye on this night. How disappointed she will be when she learns he has come—and gone. And his message—how can I soften it and yet let her know. Poor child—and poor John!"

CHAPTER II

PLOTTERS

In a two-acre lot near the confluence of the Tyber and Potomac rivers there stood an old brick house that dated back to the time when Davy Jones' plantation embraced a third of Washington.

Hidden under branching trees, by matted shrubbery, and further protected from curious eyes or the approach of man by a high brick wall on the street side, this crumbling and mouldy old place seemed a fit rendezvous for birds of the night or such creatures as creep and crawl away from sunlight.

Notwithstanding its deserted appearance however, this place, in the dark of night was oftentimes alive with men of varied kinds and if the mouldy walls of its dank cellars could have told tales, strange and exciting would they have been for here the Knights of the Golden Circle met, the Fourth Degree in the farthest buried chamber and in the outer room the lesser initiated, fully as fat with plots and enthusiasm but possessed of less cunning.

Among those who had entrée to this forbidding place was a trio of which John Wilkes Booth, the brilliant young actor, was the leading spirit, the other two being John Surratt and Louie Weichmann. With these there were occasionally several other young men who seemed to revolve around the actor like lesser satellites.

Just what the common meeting ground of Booth and the other two was might not have appeared at first sight. There was an elegant ease about the bodily movements of the actor in strong contrast to the sharp angled movements of Surratt and the alert cautious motions of Weichmann's

body. In appearance the actor was handsome. The others were commonplace. The actor possessed a voice whose richness was a compelling harmony. The voice of Surratt was thinly metallic, while the voice of Weichmann suggested much oil where there would never be enough friction to use it. Booth was a thoroughbred. The other two at best were only grade stock. Heterogeneous enough—the one and the two. What like purposes drew them into secret nearness in this hidden place?

Perhaps a common and ardent sympathy with Secession was a binding cord for at least two of the three were proud to be known as rebels against the established order. Weichmann, though of like mind, made no open admission for he was an employe of the Federal Government and supposed to be loyal to the hand that fed him.

Or it might have been their religion, in some cases an unbreakable tie, for they were sons of one Church, attended the same mass and unburdened their hearts, supposedly, in the same confessional, Weichmann even at this time trying to get to Richmond to study for the priesthood.

Whatever the mystery suspected it would have been easy of solution had one curious been privileged to overhear a few moments of conversation between the three, or more properly between the two for Booth and Surratt did most of the talking, Weichmann seemingly of the opinion that walls have ears.

It was a plot that drew these men and their followers together. A plot that when fully flowered and effective would bring such applause as is bread and meat to hungry ambition. Even more than this, if, or when it became fact, there would be money for the plotters—good gold money and plenty of it waiting in Canadian banks.

Booth, who was author of the plot, was not in it for a financial consideration though quite naturally his would be the lion's share. His short career as an actor had been

successful financially as well as artistically and his future held a fortune in store. Especially would the world be his when from the darkness of its hatching his plot had been consummated on the open stage of human events with the high lights of historical significance cast full upon it.

It was generally quite late at night when the plotters gathered owing to the fact that Booth was late getting away from the theatre where he practised much though, at this time acted little. In addition to his professional work, it was guessed by his companions that Booth was giving some of his time to a woman. Known as a ladies' man this would have been expected had not the plot superseded all interest in women for the time being. Who the exceptional woman was, they did not know. She was out of their circle of acquaintances.

The night after Booth left the ball in a fit of anger at Bessie Hale was a night when there was to be a meeting of the plotters.

He had expected to dance with Bessie Hale before leaving her. Cheated of this pleasure he found himself on the street before he had expected.

He had not walked far when the flame of his anger began to lose heat. Mother Nature was about to give birth to spring, but there was as yet an unmellowed sharpness about the March air cooling to overheated blood.

Turning his steps toward H Street, the actor walking fast, was soon at the home of Mary Surratt, mother to John and acting mother to Weichmann whose home was with the Surratts.

The parlor was lighted as usual and as he ascended the steps he heard the strains of dance music on a violin.

In the parlor Booth found three girls, Anna Surratt the daughter of the house, a cousin and a young lady who boarded there. Anna and her cousin were dancing.

As he entered the room the music and dancing came to

a quick termination and the actor was greeted with profuse and sincere expressions of joy.

"On with the dance," he exclaimed with graceful gesture after words of greeting had been exchanged. "Let me take a turn with you," and with a motion to the violinist, he took Anna in his arms and never did she dance a merrier waltz nor one that set her heart in such a whirl of delirious joy, for, in common with womankind whose paths touched his, Anna Surratt loved John Wilkes. Not before had he shown her so much attention nor seemed so glad to be with her.

It was over in a few short moments and he asked for her mother.

"She is in the dining room. Call. She will answer you."

In the dining room Mrs. Surratt was sorting clean napkins when the actor entered with a gracious salutation and a question.

"John gone?"

"Yes."

"Weichmann?"

"He's not here."

"What's the matter with Weichmann?"

"Is there anything?"

"He's always so damned afraid something's going to get him. We're none of us shouting our plans from the house tops. But, among ourselves, does he think there is a traitor in our midst?"

"What makes you ask?"

"He acts as if he does."

"He's afraid I suppose."

"Who of—me—John Harrison Surratt—who?"

"Who? Do you need to ask? Who do we all fear worse than we do the pains of death and hell? That monster in the White House. The heartless wretch who has

brought this war upon us—that is causing our sons to be murdered and that is going to turn our South over to niggers—to see that the black foot is put on the white neck! All day I have been heavy hearted because of news I read this morning. Abe's blue coated devils are winning—winning, whipping our brave men. If things keep on Lee himself will soon surrender. Then will that nigger-loving, murder-loving brute in the White House be made King and we will be his slaves!"

"Slaves to King Abe Lincoln? Never my good lady! The plan is too well ripened that will forever prevent this catastrophe. Nor will the gallant Lee hand the sword of our sacred cause over to any unworthy victor. A few days and, instead of seeing news of reverses in war, your grateful eyes will fall on words like these 'Lincoln! Hostage of War!' The letters will be bold and black, big and commanding. They will startle the world. And before you have finished the story which will be on the front page of every paper in the land, North and South, you will know that the President of the Union he could not save, is in Richmond where he will stay until every son of the South is turned out of every scabby hell-hole of a prison in the land—until the able-bodied are back on the firing line ready to save and take their own."

"Mr. Booth!" The words were exclaimed, not spoken. The woman's expression of face suggested the remainder of what she would say.

"Yes. If Weichmann comes up with his part tonight, which is only a bit of information from the War Department —and he has the code—before to-morrow night the deed may have been done! If he fails us, the great act will be delayed but for a few days only. Has ever history recorded anything so daring, so brilliant, so spectacular, so fraught with significance to an entire country—even to the world?"

"Holy Mary, Mother of God, grant you fail not. Grant

that the end of this horrid war be near. Hear our prayers for peace. Grant our petitions."

The actor was silent as Mrs. Surratt lifted her eyes and crossed herself. But he was in no prayerful mood.

"Is there any of that brandy left John got last time I was here?"

Mrs. Surratt turned to a cupboard and took out two bottles.

"Here is the brandy. This other bottle is home-made wine. I made it myself. I want you to drink to the success of your plans with me."

She poured the sparkling wine and the two glasses were lifted.

"Here's to 'Lincoln—Hostage of War'," and they drank.

"Fine," the actor exclaimed. "Now for the other."

Again she poured and again he drank. When he had emptied the bottle his blood was bounding in his veins and the urge for movement turned his feet back to the parlor, Mrs. Surratt accompanying him.

He did not tarry but his adieu stayed with the party a long time. Lifting the hand of Mrs. Surratt he touched his lips to it with a gallantry that captivated the hearts of the three young girls, saying, "This for the wine of your making." Then without hesitating he threw his arms around Anna and touching his lips to her cheek said "And this for the charming dance—while to you" and to the musician he made such a bow as is seldom seen off the stage, "my thanks for the music which has power to tame a mad man. Good night!"

The next minute the women were alone to discuss, which they did as often as he left her house, John Wilkes Booth.

The newspapers had continued from time to time different pictures of Booth. From a collection of these Anna had selected one she liked best. In her room that night she took the back off a picture called "Morning, Noon and

Night'' which Weichmann had given her and inserted the picture of Booth behind it, and pasted a fresh paper over the back.

She could not put the picture where it would be seen. Her brother John would tell her once again as he had many times done, that she must guard her heart against the actor. She was not his kind.

So she hid the picture until such time as it might be brought out, little knowing, poor girl, that the place of its display would be before a military commission where her possession of this Booth picture would be used as damning evidence against her and hers.

So smiling and singing she went to bed to dream, as others more sophisticated than herself had done, of a man; to see his handsome and animated face; to thrill under sound of his rich voice and before she awoke to see the purple star of hope come sailing up from the dawn.

CHAPTER III

"LINCOLN! HOSTAGE OF WAR!"

"LINCOLN—Hostage of War." John Wilkes Booth repeated the words several times as he made his way to the rendezvous of his plot accomplices.

When he had passed the outer and the inner guards and had made his way down the stairs below the trap door, in the house hidden by tangled growth and brick wall, his eye fell on a sight that brought to his mind a picture he had seen of refugees in the Catacombs, early Christians they had been.

This group was not in hiding for the same sublime purpose for which the early martyrs sought safe retreats. These were the satellites of the chief plotter, the actor, who awaited him.

The light around them at best was dim, and falling against the time-stained walls, seemed licked in and swallowed by the flat surfaces on four sides. In its pale glow only the faces seemed real, the outer edges of the bodies fading into darkness, even their faces looked like sickly tracing on pale discs, more shadowy and less artistic than Rembrandt knew.

Weichmann, for whom Booth's eye looked first, was there beside Surratt who occupied the first chair. The pale light falling on Surratt's high cheeks made them show sunken spots and the tightly twisted ends of his moustache gave him the appearance of a human bug with wilted antennæ. Weichmann's hair was pasted down with its usual neatness and his eyes turned quickly in their sockets at every real or imaginary noise.

Next to Weichmann the round face of a youth looked

onto the scene with childlike interest and enthusiasm. This was Herold. He had traveled southern Maryland and Virginia and as far as the Rappahannock River before coming to Washington to be a drug clerk and knew more about the roads and cross trails leading south than any man in the company. After becoming acquainted with the brilliant actor an invitation only was necessary to bring the boy into the plotters' group.

Next to Herold was a giant of a fellow, known at the Surratt home as "Wood," but among the inner circle as " Payne," which was his name, thick-necked and stolid-jawed, his face filled its little apportionment of light to overflowing. The last of the small group was called "Port Tobacco" because his home was in that town. His name was Atzerodt. He was round-shouldered. His eyes were deep-set. His hair and beard tawny and straggling, his general appearance stupid.

The words that greeted Booth as he made a hurried entrance were, "You are late!"

"But never so late as Weichmann coming up with my part. Did you bring that information?" the question addressed to Weichmann—"or will it be still later before you bring it in?"

"It will be later."

"Then we had as well make plans without it. If you had brought it we might have had our prisoner in our hand by tomorrow night. Now more waiting."

"That plan to take him out Seventh Street to the Soldiers' Home was no good," Weichmann said. "John Surratt was there with the coach and drove as far as the Navy Yard Bridge with all you fellows at hand to help him. Did you get your hostage of war? And you won't get him next time. I'd like to give you the information you want but I might get caught."

"Caught?" Booth repeated with a touch of sarcasm. "So may we all be caught. The abduction of a president is no child's play. But are we sniveling about it? I dare damnation! On this point I stand! Who's with me?"

"Here! I'm with you! Who wouldn't dare damnation for a bag of gold and a trip to Spain?"

It was Herold first who spoke. Then John Surratt said, "Rome for me. Out of the reach of extradition papers with plenty of money. Who would not take a chance?"

"Money! Money! Who knows there *is* any money?" Atzerodt sneered out this question.

"What's the matter with 'Port Tobacco'?" Booth asked glancing at him.

"If it's money that's wanted, why not turn the trick to get it. Ever see this?" and he took a well-creased newspaper from his pocket and holding a dirty forefinger on a line of black letters handed it to Booth.

The actor read, "If the citizens of the Southern Confederacy will furnish me with the cash or good securities for the same, One Million Dollars, I will cause the lives of Abraham Lincoln, Wm. H. Seward and Andrew Johnson to be taken by the first of March next. This will give us peace and satisfy the world that cruel tyrants cannot live in a land of liberty. If this is not accomplished, nothing will be claimed beyond the sum of fifty thousand dollars in advance, which is supposed to be necessary to reach and slaughter the villains. I will give, myself, one thousand dollars toward this patriotic purpose. Everyone wishing to contribute will address Box X, Cahawba, Alabama."

Booth turned the paper over and got its name—*Selma Dispatch* (Ala.).

"There's money," Atzerodt said taking the paper.

"No. There's *talk*," Booth corrected. "The first of March has gone but the tyrants remain. There's a difference

between talk no matter how enthusiastic and a cold-blooded machine such as the organization back of us is. In our work every man's portion awaits him when his duty is done. To kidnap Abe Lincoln is the greatest feat of the age. To undertake it and fail, the most colossal stupidity, and small thanks will any man get who aids the failure. I say to you, 'By the Lord our plot is a good plot as ever was laid—a good plot friends—a very excellent plot.' Is the route to Richmond ready?"

This question was addressed to John Surratt.

"By water and by land—every foot of it—underground—covered. But if it were not the Federal detectives would never know what was going on. Never have I seen such blockheads and asses. Out I go to Richmond and back I come month after month, sometimes running the blockade, sometimes underground. Never have I been molested though I have carried papers in the heels of my boots, under the boards in my buggy—many ways. Yet never has one of those blind and stupid detectives found anything. My part of the plot is ready."

"And you Herold?"

"I know mine like a book—every road and trail down the peninsula to the Rappahannock."

"Payne, with 'Port Tobacco' can you do your part?"

"I can do it alone."

"You're a giant, true. But Abe Lincoln is six feet and more. And methinks if he should find himself set upon he would put up a good fight."

"A couple of men on the side might be well."

"He walks from the White House to the War Department nearly every night late."

"Wants to get the latest Yankee victory news to sleep on."

"It's a wonder he goes alone—and late."

"Sometimes he is followed."

It was Payne, generally silent who added the last observation to the conversation.

"Who follows him?"

"Andy Johnson."

"Andy Johnson?" Booth asked quickly. "Did you see him?"

"Twice—followed him. He had a club of a cane."

"You don't want to do your work with Andy Johnson looking on."

"Poor white trash." This was John Surratt's contribution to the conversation.

"Trash is right," Booth assented. "But let us to the details. Payne with a couple of stout helpers will seize Abe the first night from this date he is out late and alone. Hurry him down through the White House garden to this quiet garden with its quieter rest room. I will have a boat ready to take him on his way to Mosby's camp. If for any reason the water route or any portion of it must be changed the underground is ready. A suggestion of murder, Andy Johnson suspected, will throw Surratt's stupid asses off the trail for a short time."

"Why not murder and be done with it?" Payne asked. "I've seen you do it on the stage so real it should be no hard trick to turn—just make your stage bigger."

"Fine work on the stage—but murder—to kill a man! Who knows what ghosts the act might breed?"

"Has the ghost of Old John Brown risen to torment you? You didn't spring the trap but you stood guard at the scaffold when this white haired old man was hanged—didn't you?"

"I was at that time a member of a Richmond Militia. We were ordered to Charlestown—to scaffold duty. I had no choice."

"But have you seen no ghosts?"

"No ghost—never thought of his having one."

"And no more would the ghost of Lincoln rise to torment you."

"Kidnapping is more to my liking. The other is as abhorrent as unnecessary. But we must move quickly. We who ride must be well mounted. We must be well armed and ready for any emergency. Have we our arms—every man to his kind? Are we ready?"

"A carbine for me— and ready."

"Knives—ready."

"Pistols—ready."

"A dagger—with me—ready."

The words were quickly spoken.

"A fine volley of words gentlemen and quickly shot off," Booth said after the rapid statements.

"Did anybody bring shackles?"

"Here," and Port Tobacco reached under his chair and drew out something that scraped harshly on the floor and rattled as he lifted it.

"Slave cuffs," he said holding them into view.

"Slave cuffs for Abe Lincoln. The long arms of the President of a Union that does not exist will look well in these trimmings. I see a picture of him in the paper even as I see the headines 'Lincoln—Hostage of War'."

Booth lifted the shackles. He shook the irons slowly.

"Give it boys, give it—not too loud—spell the name of the tyrant whose tyrannical race is run, whose tyrannical sun has set,—spell it—a letter on each shake—now—"

He shook the irons and there was a muttered sound of "L." Again he shook and, to the clanking irons, the plotters spoke the letter "I". So they spelled "L—I—N—C—O—L—N." And Booth said, "With this man, who would be king, safe in Richmond, the tide of success will turn to the outraged South. Let us turn this tide—and

quickly. The stage is set for the greatest act in history, an act that will *end the war.*

"Suppose the war comes to an end before you get your great kidnapping act done?" Weichmann asked.

"The war *will* come to an end and with it an opportunity for gaining immortal renown if nobody does any more than you to stage the act. But even without help from the wary Weichmann it is all but accomplished."

CHAPTER IV

LOVE AND CRUSHED LILACS

THE first effect on Bessie Hale when Mrs. Temple in answer to an inquiry regarding her actor-lover, told her of his untimely departure, was one of anger for, though possessing the youth and beauty and amiability said in adoring moments by the male sex to be angelic, the temperamental actor's sweetheart was in a degree as human as himself.

"The big baby," she exclaimed, a flush that was not of pleasure on her fair cheek. "Does he want me to sit around like a dumb wall flower because he is not with me? He had as well put me in a strait-jacket and be done with it. Bob Lincoln is a splendid dancer. Why should I not dance with him when John Wilkes is not here. Besides he is half in love with me."

"That's just the trouble. Captain Lincoln is not only half in love with you. He is head over heels in love with you. I know it, he knows it and the worst is, John knows it. It is natural for a lover to be jealous especially when the son of a president is his rival."

"Rival? John Wilkes has no rival. I have told him so as often as he has charged me with caring for Bob Lincoln or any other of the young men I count as friends. There's no use letting a silly jealousy run away with his common sense. It makes me angry to see him make such a fool of himself and I will tell him so tomorrow."

Then she danced again with young Captain Robert Lincoln and smiling on him in such a manner as acts on the male heart like champagne in springtime.

As long as the dance lasted the smiles were a part of

it. But when it was over and she stood again by Mrs. Temple the smile made way for a sigh and she said wearily, "I do not want to dance any more. May I go to your parlor and rest—and think?"

When Mrs. Temple followed her young friend a short time later she found her wiping red eyes with a wet handkerchief.

"I couldn't help crying," she explained giving her eyes a last touch. "He spoiled the dance for me. If he had studied how to hurt me he could not have devised a better plan. He knew I expected him—knew I dressed for him—knew I wanted him."

"I imagine that was what angered him—knowing you did expect him and then finding a rival where he had planned to be. It was that way the other time."

"Oh dear!" and again the handkerchief went to the wet eyes. "That other time! I explained—I told him I was only passing the minutes until he came. And—I told him that it would not happen again and now it has. But how did I know he would leave a rehearsal half an hour earlier than he was ever known to before?"

"He will be cooled off before morning and will listen to your explanation."

"It took him longer than overnight to cool off before. It seemed ages."

"Only a week."

"Only a week? It will be a week by breakfast time. I hope to see him then."

But there was no John Wilkes at breakfast nor was he seen around the hotel that morning. But there did come to Bessie Hale an exquisite bouquet from the White House conservatory, a handsome reminder of the other man.

With an anxiety told by the watchful eyes that belied the girl's smile, she waited dinner. But the popular actor did not appear and after they had dined Mrs. Temple

learned from the clerk that John Wilkes had checked out early that morning saying he was going to Baltimore.

"He has gone to see his mother," Mrs. Temple said. "He will be back in a few days and will be so glad to see you he will have forgotten his anger of a night."

But the days passed and no sign of the angry lover. Flowers continued to come from the White House, however, and Bessie Hale went to several dances with Robert Lincoln. But she seemed to be changed in some way the young man could not understand, and as often as he asked her if she were not feeling well she told him she was tired.

And indeed she was tired, tired watching in the parlors and in the dining room for a sight of the actor, tired of watching on the streets and at the balls for the sight of one man.

But it was not until she knew that he was back in Washington that the effects of their unhappy separation really made her unfit for social duties.

It was in the lobby she caught a glimpse of him as she came in from a drive in the afternoon. At sight of him her heart gave a bound of joy. Then her face went white for if he knew she was near he gave no evidence of it.

Hastening to her room she shut herself in and cried more tears than she could count, after which she decided he might have just arrived in the city, might have been very busy, might not have seen her and might be at dinner with them.

One mirrored glimpse of herself and she knew she had work to do to make herself look presentable. Red eyes, pale cheeks and dishevelled hair never held any man's heart, leastwise the heart of an artist like the actor John Wilkes.

Hope lent skill to her fingers and color to her face and by dinner time, dressed with unusual care, Bessie Hale never looked lovelier.

There was no place set for the actor at the family table where he often ate with the Temples and the Hales. It was

not likely anybody knew he was in the city. But surely he would come into the dining room, and for his appearance Bessie Hale watched.

But there was no sight of him and having scarcely touched her dinner, the girl, when they would have lingered for a visit, plead a *headache* and went to her room where she stayed two days.

The night of the second day there was to be the usual dance at the National and Mrs. Temple urged her young friend to shake off her spell of the blues and attend. This she refused to do with the melancholy information that she never expected to dance again.

That night Mrs. Temple saw John Wilkes at the ball. With his usual friendly grace he greeted her, telling her he had been out of the city.

"John," Mrs. Temple said, drawing him aside, "may I talk to you like a mother?"

"The privilege is yours," and he bowed in the gracious manner that so well became his handsome face and form.

"Then let me say you ought to be ashamed of yourself."

"For what, if you please?"

"For treating Bessie Hale the way you have. The poor child looks like a ghost. She hasn't eaten a square meal in a week and her eyes, well her eyes inspire pity—that's all. She was never so hurt in her life."

"So Bessie Hale is hurt? In answer to your talk with me as a son, may I speak to you as a mother? I know full well the chivalry that is due woman. But may I ask why only a woman's hurt—heart hurt we are talking about now—is taken into consideration? Is it not possible men are hurt also? May I tell you I have never been so hurt as by the way she has treated me?

"But you know, John, she is not in love with Robert Lincoln—*you know it.*"

"We've been through this before. She made me believe

that she was not in love with him. But if she is not, why does she parade him before my eyes—glide in front of my very eyes in that man's arms? Old Abe Lincoln's son! Why cannot she pick on some other fellow to use as a red flag?"

"Red flag? Bessie Hale wouldn't shake a red flag under any man's eyes. She's not that kind—and you above all men. When a woman loves a man she does not try to use a red flag on him. It's dangerous. Instinctively she knows it."

"You speak my own opinion. With Bob Lincoln as the flag what do you make of Bessie Hale's actions?"

"She was only passing the time until you came. She was not expecting you for a half hour. She would not have looked at Robert Lincoln again that night if you had not deserted her. My, how disappointed she was!"

"So was I. And if it were the first time this has happened I might call it a misunderstanding as I did before and forget by-gones. But to have it happen again—what's the use of wasting time patching up breaks that will not stay patched? You say, Bessie Hale loves me and she has sworn it. You say I love Bessie Hale and I swear to you I do. I've flirted with many a girl as pretty and I've had attacks of jealousy caused by several feminine beauties. I have even thought myself in love a couple of times. But it takes the genuine to show up the imitation. Bessie Hale is different from the rest. Loving her I know I never loved any of the others and, feeling as I do, I doubt if I ever really love another woman. But if Fate is against it, what's the use?"

"John," and Mrs. Temple contemplated him with kindly eye, "you're not a fool. Don't make one of yourself. Go to Bessie. Nothing more is necessary. She will do the rest. Will you do it?"

"Because I am not a fool and have no intention of

making one of myself I will not see Bessie Hale. It is the only way. I've been too damned hurt to attend to business and let me assure you I *have* business these days. When my plans become known you will have just cause to be proud of me, Mrs. Temple."

"Proud of you! What can you possibly do to make me prouder of you—to make Bessie Hale prouder of you, than we now are?"

"Only a short time more and you will get the news. And while you are not in sympathy with my purpose, you cannot fail to be proud of the achievement though you may never speak to me again, because of my act."

"No mistake you can ever make will make me less than your friend, and your friend's heart would be made happy if you would correct the mistake you are making in shunning Bessie Hale as if she had the pest."

"You should have been a lawyer," the actor replied laughing. "Good night. I have an important meeting," and with the courtly bow that so delighted her, John Wilkes Booth left Mrs. Temple.

She watched him, as with quick step he disappeared behind a group of laughing ball guests, with a hope that was in vain as she learned the next morning, that he would see Bessie Hale that night.

The night following her talk with John Wilkes, a talk which seemed to be without results, Mrs. Temple persuaded Bessie Hale to go with her to the ball room for a short time.

The girl was pale, almost as if she had suffered a spell of sickness, and in the simple white dress she wore, her only decoration a bunch of white lilacs as a corsage, she suggested a phantom lady, especially since she was a quiet onlooker instead of a participant in the dance.

The orchestra had started the familiar Strauss waltz, the strains of which stirred sentiment into a keen and painful sensation because of the times her feet had kept time to it as

her heart beat close to that of her lover. With Mrs. Temple she stood to see the dancers glide into motion on the floor under the brilliant lights.

Scarce had the dance begun than she heard her name softly spoken from behind—almost in her ear.

"Bessie."

Turning, with a quick heart throb, she found herself face to face with the man her heart was hungry for.

"Oh," she gasped with a glad breath. "John!"

He held his arms out saying, "Let us dance."

For a moment after they had glided into the dance the girl kept her face close against the man's shoulder, almost as if she were resting it against a pillow.

"Look at me," he whispered. "Why the tears? Are you sorry?"

"I am so happy! Oh John—it is just like heaven to be here, close to you."

"I want to talk to you."

"I cannot talk. I can only feel—feel you near."

He drew her a little closer.

"When the dance ends let us go to Mrs. Temple's parlor."

So they did and here with fewer words than either imagined it could be done the interrupted trend of their love affair was again set in rapturous motion.

"I swore that I'd never come back. That I am here proves the measure and quality of my love for you, Bessie Hale. I've loved other girls before, dozens of them. I have a package of letters, ribbon tied in my big dress-trunk, I'll let you read them sometime, choice specimens I saved from a large assortment. I never asked but one other girl to marry me. She accepted. She was a little wizard of the dance. She gave me a pair of pink satin slippers for a keepsake. These are in the big trunk, too. But long ago, almost as soon as I had asked her to marry

me I saw my mistake. She broke the engagement—said I wasn't true to her. Nor was I. I did not want to be. But you—you are different. Do you remember the first time we ever read *Romeo and Juliet* together?"

She was sitting on his knee with one arm around his neck, her fingers playing with the silky black hair that fell over his brow.

She brushed back a lock that had fallen over his right eyebrow, the one high-arched by a scar.

"Do I remember?" she answered touching her lips to the scar. "Do I remember that I am to doubt the stars are fire—before I doubt your love, that you are to doubt truth to be a liar before you doubt my love?"

Catching her to him he pressed her close—so close the scent of white lilacs, their fragrance crushed from the delicate blooms clustered at her belt, was loosed on the air.

"Your lips against that little scar have made a sacred spot," he whispered.

"Though not only your body but your soul should be scarred from head to foot, if in my love there is anything to give you hope when you are cast down, give you comfort when the world goes wrong, anything sacred and purifying remember now and always, that love is yours—yours—for you only, now and until the stars are no longer fire."

"Pray that I feel the touch of your lips in the long times when I may be away from you, and God blast me, and may the spot your lips touched burn like undying fire if I am not true to you."

"I do not want you to be away from me for long times. I want to be near you always. I want to see more of you here than I do now. Sometimes days, almost weeks go by without a visit with you. Let it be different."

"Just now and for past weeks I have been engaged in a big plan—perhaps 'plot' is the word to be used. Your father would call it a most satanic plot. From his view-

point it is. But from mine it is one of the grandest pieces of acting the world has ever known. In the South where I have been royally greeted and fêted—New Orleans, Mobile, Richmond—in such places my name will rank with that of the world's greatest and be forever connected with that of Abraham Lincoln. This may sound egotistical but time will prove if I am right. You will be with me to share my great triumphs."

"And it is a great plan that has been taking you away so much? Well I am interested. Indeed more, I am consumed with curiosity to know what you are going to do."

"In the nature of the case I cannot tell you but you will have a short time only to wait.

"Waiting is not easy but I can do anything for you."

A few moments they sat, in each others' arms, silent in their joy at being again together, this time to part no more as they had sworn.

"What is the fragrance that comes all around us like incense from some lovely garden?" he asked as the crushed lilacs continued to give off their perfume.

"White lilacs. The fragrance is faint until they are crushed. Sometimes I wonder if love is the same way. It always seems my love for you is deeper and more lasting, sweeter, more fragrant, after it has been cruelly hurt."

"It will not be hurt again."

"Dear, dear John," Bessie Hale said as he left her, "I am so happy. Fate cannot devise anything that can keep my love from you because it is yours. God made it that way. Forever and forever."

"Forever and forever," he repeated softly. "Amen, sweet Bessie Hale."

A few days after John Wilkes Booth and Bessie Hale had sworn a last eternal fealty to each other, two of the world's greatest generals met face to face, the peerless leader of the Lost Cause handed his sword to the uncon-

quered leader of the forces on whose banner victory was perched—a sword of surrender which was never taken in hand as such.

News that peace was again to prevail threw Washington into paroxysms of joy. Exploding rockets made the sky bright. The air was full of the sound of band music. Crowds surged the streets shouting, singing, waving flags, blowing horns, some shouting, a few even returning thanks to Almighty God that the end of four years of bloody conflict had arrived.

As the crowds thronged the streets the faces of hundreds were turned toward the White House where President Lincoln was to make a speech.

Among those who hurried that they might get good standing room were Mrs. Temple, Bessie Hale and her mother. At a point where they could see Mr. Lincoln as he spoke they listened to the bands playing patriotic airs, popular war-time songs and hymns of victory. And when the President stepped out and the band struck up *"Dixie"* they listened to what he should say.

"Just like him," Mrs. Temple said after hearing the President say in his kindly way that *"Dixie"* was not the song of a portion of the country but a splendid song of the re-united whole.

Mrs. Temple and Mrs. Hale had eyes only for President Lincoln who spoke from notes, one of his small sons holding a light. The picture of the tall man standing in the dim light speaking while rockets made the sky bright, was one they never forgot for though they knew it not this was the last time these loyal friends of Abraham Lincoln were ever to look on his live body. Times afterward when the picture of him came to them it was with a touch of symbolism, the light about his deeply lined face was so dim and close about while that of the sky rockets was so brilliant but always climbing upward in the heavens.

Bessie Hale, though an ardent admirer of the President found her interest divided and from the President, speaking in his kindliest way, his seamed face bright with smiles, her eyes wandered continually, hoping in the crowd to catch sight of John Wilkes Booth.

But if he were there she did not see him. The next day she had a few moments of unsatisfactory conversation with him but he seemed distracted, worried, unlike himself and she wondered why but decided his wonderful plan, whatever it was, was not working right.

Several days passed bringing the time close to Easter and Bessie Hale's lover still seemed absorbed in some perplexing question or brooding over some disappointment.

On April the 14th the Hales and Temples with the actor had dinner together. He had spent half an hour with Bessie in Mrs. Temple's parlor, was quite like himself, was never in better spirits, was never more charming, and Bessie Hale's face was radiant.

At this happy dinner many quotations from Shakespeare were passed back and forth. Snatches of plays were given across the table and when Booth about to leave, asked, " 'When shall we three meet again'?" Bessie Hale's prompt answer was, " 'When the hurly burly's done'."

It was after he had taken leave of the dinner party he returned to the table and to Bessie's side and said to her, " 'Nymph, in thy orisons, be all my sins remembered'." Again he took her hand. He pressed it. He looked long and deeply into her eyes as if reading something unspoken in her soul.

Then with a last courteous bow he hurried away and those who sat at the table no more knew they had seen him for the last time than they had known they were looking the last time on Abraham Lincoln when they heard him speak but a few nights before.

CHAPTER V

RIDERS OF THE NIGHT

It was nearing eleven o'clock on the night of Friday, April the 14th, when the guards at the East Potomac Bridge, just out of Washington were startled from a half doze by the ringing sound of horse hoofs coming toward the bridge at terrific speed.

It was a drab night because of clouds, low-hanging and baggy with unshed rain. From their fringes ragged bits were torn by a mysteriously soft and fitful breeze to be scattered here and there, and suggested by their moist and vapid touch against human flesh, something uncanny.

"A spooky night," one of the guards had exclaimed as he ran his fingers across his cheek over the place of the passing vapor touch.

But it was no spook that was materializing from the grey mist of the spring night and almost before the guard had drawn himself in position of defense, a charger, black as midnight dashed suddenly before him and a rider whose face shone pallid in the dim light of the soldier's lantern, and whose hair was as dark as the shadows close to the ground, cried "Open the gate!"

"The password," the guard demanded thrusting his sword before the nose of the panting steed.

"*'T. B. Road'*," was the quick answer.

The gate was opened. The pallid-faced man on the racing mount was gone and the damp silence had swallowed the echo of his going.

"What kind is *he*? Drunk, I say," was the question and answer of the guard to his helper at the gate.

A second time the guards were on the borderline of a restful doze when called to duty by the sound of an approaching horse which also came at speed telling a great urge. But this was not the easy speed of a thoroughbred and the guards had longer to wait and less of interest to see when the second horseman came to a stop than the first time.

A young fellow he was, a mere stripling whose beardless face was anxious as he said, "Has anybody passed?"

"Tonight you mean?"

"In the last half hour."

"Yes—on a black horse."

"Let me through."

"The password."

"*'T. B. Road'.*"

The gate swung open and the second horseman disappeared as the first had done.

Yet again there came another rider. It was midnight. The clouds of unshed rain were drawing together as if to form one unbroken blanket. The night breeze was dying. The silence was thick and the first sound of the approaching hoofs was like the thud of padded mallets on soft earth.

"Ho there!" cried the horseman drawing up.

"The password," and again a sword lay across the pathway.

"Password? Great God! Would you hold an officer up when the President of the United States has been shot?"

"The President shot—President Abe Lincoln?" There was excitement in the question but the sword was not withdrawn.

"Yes. Somebody slipped into his box at Ford's Theatre and shot him in the head."

"Who was it?"

"That's what everybody is asking everybody else and nobody knows anything. Washington has gone crazy. The streets are full of people cursing and crying, asking questions and looking for somebody to lynch. But the assassin escaped, on a horse, so it is believed. At any rate I have been sent to watch this gate. Has anybody passed out the last hour or so?"

"Two men, mounted, and both going as if the devil were blowing his breath on their coat tails."

"They had the password?"

"On their tongues, smooth as wax."

"Drunken officers maybe. They never get so thick-tongued they cannot spit out the password."

"Didn't look like officers but I asked no questions. My orders are to get the password. When I get it I open the gate."

"Were the two men together?"

"No."

"Since both could not have been the assassin it is not likely either was. Still my orders are to follow anybody who goes this way."

"And mine to let none pass. But you'll have no trouble getting passing authority if you go to the right place."

"I'll go back. Perhaps they have already caught and lynched the murderer."

"The President is really dead?"

"Dying, they said."

"God, I am sorry. *There* was a human being."

"You knew him?"

"Never saw him. But I have a brother who would wade through hell fire and brimstone for him. After thirty-six hours duty and him sick and coughing his head off, he fell on the ground asleep. He was sentenced to be shot. He's alive today to tell the tale to his four little boys—the story

of how President Abe Lincoln saved him. He's that kind. Some wouldn't have taken time to look into the case. Some wouldn't have guts enough to stop a court-martial killing. My God I'm sorry!"

After half an hour of fast riding the first horseman who passed the guard at the East Potomac bridge, slowed down.

In the murk of the night, sodden with moisture, solitary trees loomed up like giant sentinels wrapped in cloaks of grey while groups and banks of trees made phantom hills silhouetted in shadows against the brooding sky.

It was alongside a low shadow bank that the rider drew rein. After pausing a moment to listen he slipped from the horse, the black body of which was scarcely distinguishable against the deep shade in which the man stood.

As he moved against the freshly leaved branches in the gloom, there was a sudden stirring overhead and the deep, damp silence was penetrated by a voice crying sharply "W--h--o--o?"

The man in the shadow drew back quickly and with bated breath started at a touch on his cheek.

It was only the momentary touch of moving leaves. A drop of water that had gathered on their surface from the moist night fell on the man's face and like an unsolicited tear crossed his check and dropped before his nervous fingers caught it.

The sound and motion were gone in less than a minute. The brooding silence was as if it had not been disturbed by man or beast or bird of the night.

The horseman leaned against his motionless steed, lifted one foot and with careful fingers pressed an ankle encased in a high riding boot.

For the part of a moment a stifled groan sounded in the shadow. This too seemed unreal as the shadows, and was quickly swallowed by the heavy silence.

After waiting some time, the man behind the horse in the shadow lifted his head and turned his ear quickly to the wind. There was the sound of horse hoofs—indistinct but regular and following the road he had taken.

He straightened up, put his arm gently across the head of the horse, pulled back a trifle into the dark and stood ready for a quick mount.

As the speeding horse drew near he relaxed his vigilance.

The place was reassuring. A short low whistle, repeating three double-accented staccato notes, wary and wordless, sounded from the shadows.

The horseman slowed down.

Again the call, and the horseman turned back.

"You?"

"Herold."

"I'm here."

The second rider drew into the shadow and dismounted, backing his horse under the low branches and bringing down a shower of slow moving water drops.

"The road quiet behind you?"

"Still as the dead outside Washington. But around the theatre! Hell was turning itself loose as I left. My heels itched to drive the spur and my hand to lay a blow. But I knew it must be slow for me until you had a good get-away."

"You must follow well in the rear until we leave Mudd's. If they get on the trail and take you, you can prove an alibi."

"Catch me! God—I don't expect to be caught. I'm on my way to Spain."

"Spain! You're a long way from Spain. Don't be a damn fool. By daybreak the woods and fields of Maryland—even the swamps will be overrun with man-hunters

as flies overrun a fresh dung heap. Like famished wolves they will scour creation for the rewards that will be offered. Alive they will never take me. Dead—what matter if they skin my body and burn it. Like the ghost of the Dane I will stand by and watch the stage play of mere mortals—mad—exultant mortals but poor flies at last. Nor would they know of my existence unless like the sheeted dead of Rome I should squeak and gibber to affright them."

"A fine speech but for the occasion 'Keep still and be ready to run' would sound better to me."

"Run? I could not if I would. I cannot walk."

"What's wrong?"

"As I leaped to the stage from the President's box, my spur caught in the flag draping it. My ankle turned as it struck the floor. I do not think the bone is broken but it's so swollen I cannot get my boot off and it burns like fire. We must hurry on. At Dr. Mudd's we will stop long enough to get it fixed. I must be safely housed and my horse concealed before daylight. As before, you follow. Keep a keen ear to the wind. If you are followed and find escape uncertain, turn about and meet whoever comes. Tell them you are on your way to Washington to get a doctor—Doctor May if his name should be asked. Your mother is sick. Some little distance this side of Mudd's I will wait. If all is well you will join me and together we will take a rest before leaving for Coxe's. After that we must keep together and you are to be the guide. By-paths and swamps—I know nothing about them."

"I know every road and by-path between Coxe's and the Rappahannock. But it's hair-raising business, this I'm in. Only a fat purse and freedom from fear in Spain could pay for it. I was in for the kidnapping and had you mapped from start to finish. But murder—God, Booth—I never planned to be in on murder."

"Some acts are inevitable. What the fates impose, that, men must needs abide. Who would have done it had I failed?"

"Perhaps you did not kill him."

"I stood close and fired steadily. There is no chance that he is not as Caesar was when his fated Ides of March had come."

There was spirit in the words and there was music as of some deeply stirred instrument being played upon. But after a moment of silence the man spoke again and the voice was commonplace. He had lifted his hands.

"It rains," he said.

"To wet us."

"No. To cover tracks and hold daylight back an hour. Let us be going."

The second night rider overtook the first soon after the two had crossed into Charles County. Together and without words they skirted the Mattawoman swamps that bordered the road. Beantown, its few mean buildings scarcely distinguishable in the rain, and St. Peter's Catholic Church had been passed before they stopped to rest at a fork leading from the main road to Bryantown.

"Do you know where we are?" Herold asked drawing his horse close to Booth's. "Did you ever notice what lies all around this cross road?" and there was a tone of disquiet in his voice.

"Beside the wet and darkness, what lies around us?"

"Graves—the graveyard of the church we passed on the left, half of a mile back. It's on both sides of us—*they* are."

"A graveyard? What's new or strange about a graveyard?"

"Nothing unless it's a new grave. You know more about ghosts than any man I ever heard talk. You've met them. I've seen you—in the play. Do they walk in the rain?"

"I never heard of one carrying an umbrella. Ghosts! Of what concern are they just now? How far is it to Dr. Mudd's? I've lost my bearings. I am hot—feverish from the pain coming up my side. It's my leg!"

"Two miles ahead a gate leads into a field. Across the field is Mudd's."

"We must press on. Just a moment more of rest. God! This is a hard night," and the rider of the black horse dropped his head on his arm over the pommel.

The gentle falling of the rain was peaceful, restful and pleasing, in a way like a veil of monotonous harmony, grey in color and suggestive of security. The silence, which was its wide extended background, was penetrating. The dripping of water was not out of harmony with the night.

But the crowing of a cock which sounded broke the silence rudely. It was a muffled crowing yet insistent and foreign to Nature's setting of clouds and water and shadows and absence of sound-making actors.

"A cock crowing," the youth said.

There came no response from the head bowed over the pommel.

Again came the call of the chanticleer making its way over the damp legato of the rain drops.

"He crows again," and there was a hint of expectancy in the tone. But there was no intimation that the bowed figure had heard.

For a moment there was a lull in the softly falling rain when a third time the crowing of the cock sounded clearer, as if nearer.

"Three times—Booth—the cock crowed three times."

"What of it?"

"Wasn't yesterday Good Friday? Didn't you go to early Mass yesterday morning?"

"Yes. But what has Mass to do with the crowing of a country cock?"

"Didn't the cock crow three times when somebody betrayed the Saviour?"

"What if it did?"

"It's in my mind."

"Get it out. Nobody around here has betrayed any saviour. Think of something to the point."

"It was the rooster stirred me up—stirred up a feeling I don't like."

"It was no rooster that stirred up the feelings I don't like. My leg! The pain is running up to the top of my head and driving me frantic. Let us be going."

CHAPTER VI

"NOW HE BELONGS TO THE AGES"

THE tall clock on the mantel in Dr. Mudd's parlor had just struck four when a quick and insistent rapping was heard at his front door.

"Who's there?" he called.

"A man with a broken leg. He's suffering."

Lifting his candle to the faces that waited as he opened the door Dr. Mudd exclaimed "Booth!"

"My name is 'Boyd'."

"All right, Boyd, come in. What's up?"

"I fell and broke my leg. Let us go into a back room so no light will show. Tell the young man where to conceal two horses. God—let me sit down! Let me get my boot off!"

It was in a well-curtained up-stairs room Dr. Mudd, in the light of candles set about the floor, cut the long riding boot from the swollen leg. Here he improvised splints from a cigar box and dressed and bandaged the painful ankle. Before he had finished he knew why his patient had arrived suddenly and at so untimely an hour, dripping wet, pallid of face, suffering and fainting.

"It's not broken," he had said of the leg. "There may be a bit of splintered bone but I think a few days rest will see you able to get about. This room is yours for as long as you need it."

"Rest!" and the pallid-faced patient laughed mirthlessly. "Can a man rest with ten thousand human blood hounds on his trail?"

"What has happened? Has the plot been discovered?"

"Not a plot discovered but an act heralded by a pistol shot. I shot President Lincoln."

"No! Did you kill him?"

"The gun was against his head and my hand was steady."

"Booth," and there was a moment's hesitation after the word. "I was with you in your kidnapping plot. It was great. But when it comes to murder—"

"Do not say you are not with me," was the quick interruption spoken with a flash of anger. "What of the Oath of the Order signed in your own blood? You and Coxe and Bainbridge and Ruggles and every man down the line are with me until I safely reach Colonel Mosby at Bowling Green. After that I can take care of myself. Give me some brandy and a bed."

How long the patient in Dr. Mudd's upstairs room had been asleep when he was suddenly wakened in an agony of great fright, he did not know. Indeed, he did not at first know whether he was dead or alive. Running his fingers across his brow he found it cold with a sweat like that of death. He moved his hands over his arms. They too were cold—clammy. And his legs and body all were like the dead. He felt dead. And yet he was moving his own cold hands over his own cold body. He could not be dead.

What had frightened him? The room was restfully dark. There was no sound save that of desultory dripping from the eaves close above his window.

Again the frightened and perplexed man pressed his fingers to his brow; felt his hands; his legs; his body. All were cold. But this time he passed his hand across his abdomen and here he found a warm spot lying over his solar plexus.

With glad eagerness he moved his fingers over the warm, dry surface and rested them. As he did so, with such magic

as old stories are made of, he was transported to a strange room where, on a bed, lay the body of a man.

Around the bed were gathered men—physicians, and Cabinet members of a great republic, for the body lying there was that of the President of the United States. And beside the bed, her face buried over one of the man's still hands and her shoulders shivering with convulsions of grief, knelt a woman.

But none of this drew the unseen visitor's attention. To him the centre of unearthly interest was the body on which his eyes were fastened in a gaze he had no power to turn away.

Softly, almost imperceptibly, the white sheet drawn smooth over the dying heart, moved up and down.

With his fingers on the wrist of a long hand, whose fingers lay lifelessly against the white, a physician knelt, his eyes on his watch.

For a moment the picture was without a sound or motion. Then the physician placed the long hand tenderly over the breast in which the tired heart had given up its struggle. He lifted his eyes from his watch to the group of men who with anxious, tear-stained faces were breathlessly watching his movements. He closed his watch gently and arose.

"NOW HE BELONGS TO THE AGES."

As real and insistent as the ever present Now the words sounded to the unseen watcher at the bedside. Yet their echo seemed speeding down a corridor so long that its end was lost in Futurity.

Starting up in his bed, his hand thrown to his brow, his face ashy, the occupant of the upstairs room in the Mudd home gasped, "What voice is that?"

Then he smiled, a pitiful mock effort at reassurance and said, "It was a dream."

"Now he belongs to the ages."

Again he heard the words more distinctly than if spoken by human lips close to his ear.

"My God!" he cried in white fear. "Who is doing the talking? It is not the voice of a man or a woman! It is not the voice of a god or a beast! It is not here nor there nor anywhere! Who speaks? But let me see the time when this thing happened."

He struck a match and held it to his watch face.

"Half past seven," he said blowing out the light. "My spirit within me has been at war . . . Beads of sweat stand on my brow like bubbles on a late disturbed stream. There's a way to end such silly dreams," and reaching for a bottle Dr. Mudd had placed beside his bed, he drank.

"Now he belongs to the ages."

The words sounded a third time as he pressed his head against his pillow.

Again he sprang up crying, "Who speaks? Tell me, what voice is this that stabs my inwards with its phantom tongue?"

He listened.

All was still.

"There was no Voice," he laughed and he took another drink.

CHAPTER VII

THE HAUNTED THICKET

RAIN clouds, increasingly dripping, still hid the sun that would have been three hours high when Dr. Mudd entered the room of his patient. He carried a walking support, rudely constructed from a broom handle. His presentation speech, as he held it toward the man with the crippled ankle, was, "I made it for you to get out of here with and you had better move quick."

"You have news?"

"I have just returned from Bryantown."

"He is dead?"

"Died this morning."

"What time?" and the head on the pillow, its disheveled raven hair and gleaming dark eyes giving it a wild appearance, lifted suddenly and the words were quickly repeated. "What time?"

"Somewhere about seven-thirty, they said."

"Seven-thirty! Great God!"

"You expected it?"

"Yes—but not to be there *when the man's soul left his body.*"

"Are you drunk?" and Dr. Mudd glanced at the bottle. "You've been nowhere."

"It was not only what I saw. It was what I heard—there was a Voice."

"What you saw and what you heard are of one piece. Nobody has been in this room since you left. Nobody has even been upstairs. How could you have heard anybody talking?"

"*Anybody?* I did not hear *anybody.* What I heard was nobody—*had* no body. But I heard it—heard it after I had seen. It was as if I had gone into another world, a cold place, for I shivered. My blood was of no use to me there."

"I don't know what you are talking about," and Dr. Mudd put his fingers against the wrist of the wild-eyed man. "Do you know?"

"No—that's it. What was it—how was it?

"It must have been a dream."

"A dream. Such a dream!" and the head sank wearily back on the pillow.

"Bad dreams come naturally from nervous strain and feverish brains. Don't pay any attention to dreams. You are the kind to have them and they will run you crazy if you take them seriously. You are all out of order now over this one," and the doctor dropped the white wrist. "You go too strong on your brandy, too. Brandy is full of dreams. What you must do is to keep your mind on getting to Coxe's. Danger lessens every foot nearer the Rappahannock you get. You must hurry."

"Not in daylight."

"No. But as soon as night falls and thank God its the dark of the moon. Herold left with the horses well before daylight for the swamp west of Bryantown where he will conceal himself until you join him tonight. You will ride one of my horses. I will go with you and bring him back. There's a cut through the swamp to Coxe's. Herold says he can find it. Meantime, you can take off that moustache and put some of the healthy tan of an honest Confederate soldier on your face. I have it in a bottle. I also have for you a well worn soldier cap and cape.

If by chance one in authority should come here before night, you can play the soldier's part, can't you?"

"Yes. I am late from Mosby's camp. Wounded. Sick. Humiliated at the act of Lee. Did you hear anything definite about the search?"

"Nothing more than that thousands of Federal soldiers, and Washington is running over with them now, black as well as white, will scour the woods for John Wilkes Booth."

"Niggers! Black bodies under blue coats will scour the woods for John Wilkes Booth!" There was both anger and supreme contempt in the exclamation. "Never will a black hand lay hold of the live body of *this* white man even if he *has* killed their nigger-loving Lincoln!"

After a day's rest "Boyd" felt fully equal to the journey to meet Herold at the edge of the swamp. The swelling in his ankle was going down and the pain less acute. The mental upheaval that had been occasioned by his imagination of a death-bed scene and a Voice had given place to a normal condition of the man's five dependable senses.

As soon as darkness made travel safe, with Dr. Mudd, the fugitive started. On such soft roads and grassy paths as the horses could make speed without noise, they were well urged. Where the sound of hoofs might result, the way was slow. With few words the two men traveled, alert for a sight or sound that might hint at the nearness of an enemy to their freedom.

At the appointed place Herold was found waiting. It had been intended to use the horses. But at the last moment Herold confessed he was not sure of the way through, and danger of discovery seemed greater with the horses.

"Better take them back," Boyd said to Dr. Mudd.

"What will I do with them?"

"They will not make you as much trouble as you fear. If my horse is described it will be the one which I kept at the livery stable—the sorrel. I started on it. This will be testified to. The black was with a man who exchanged it for the sorrel. He will be dumb. So my black horse will not make you the trouble the sorrel would have done. Herold's horse is as common as a rabbit. No danger there."

After Dr. Mudd had gone with the horses, Herold and Boyd made their way slowly into the swamp, most of the time feeling their way foot by foot. Sometimes they struck what seemed to be a path but when it grew too smooth they turned to the right or the left not knowing but that they might stumble upon some sentry though Boyd did not think there had been time to picket the swamps yet.

After what seemed hours of extremely slow and painful travel for Boyd, close to the ground and under the protecting shade of Herold's hat, he struck a match to consult his watch.

"Only midnight," he said wearily. "How far have we penetrated into this jungle?"

"We haven't come far."

"Is stopping safe?"

"Not yet. I can't tell exactly where we are but we've got to keep going until we get nearly to the creek. We can tell when we're getting there by the shape of the tree line against the South sky."

With a groan Boyd started on again, limping his way and stopping to lift his lame leg when his foot struck a root or any other obstruction.

After what seemed long hours Herold made the glad announcement that they were getting to a place where they might rest as the dim tree line told him the creek was near.

Having reached a thicket, by the light of matches well shaded, they looked about for a resting place. Just beyond an unusally dense thicket an open space told where a tobacco field had been, at the edge of which, well concealed by brush, a pile of tobacco leaves had been left.

Here was a bed. Without words Herold spread a shawl he carried over the leaves and on this the two men sank. Adjusting his lame leg comfortably and covering himself with his big army cape, Boyd gave a sigh of thankfulness. The faint odor of tobacco reached his nostrils and his body pressed against the leafy bed. Never had tobacco been so refreshing—so soothing. He closed his eyes and slept.

As he lay dead to the natural world around him, Boyd heard the ringing of a bell. Very faint and far away it seemed as if it were coming over long green slopes and low hills with, here and there, plum trees in blossom. It seemed he could smell the faint fragrance on the mild spring air.

The bell kept ringing. He felt a hand larger than his own—a nice warm hand around his and experienced the motion of going over the green grassy slope toward the place where the bell was ringing, sounding a little clearer as he made his way.

He knew now where he was going. He was on his way with his mother to a little country church she attended when she could not go to Baltimore to attend her own church. And he knew just which Sunday it was for he remembered his mother carried a stalk of white lilies to put in a vase by the minister's stand. She let him carry them until he turned them upside down and was about to trail their fragrant whiteness in the path when she rescued them. He must have been a very small boy for he could not remember what the minister looked like nor anybody else that was present. Perhaps he had gone to sleep.

If so it was not until after the music for he heard voices singing, "He is risen! He is risen!"

But there were words which sounded nearer. Words that came with such startling nearness the dreaming man sprang up to see who spoke, " 'I am he that liveth and was dead and behold I am alive forever more. Amen!"

It was the dim dawn of Easter morning. Sitting upright on his bed of moist tobacco leaves, Boyd looked about and listened.

Herold lay as he had dropped, sleeping so easily there was scarce a sound from his breathing. All was still. Not even an early bird yet chirped in the freshly-leaved thicket.

" 'I am he that liveth . . . and was dead and behold I am alive forever more'."

With the words the man felt the strange coolness creeping over him that he had experienced the morning before in the upper chamber of the Mudd home—that unearthy coolness that came as if he had been suddenly moved into some strange world where bodies count for naught. It was the same mysterious Voice that had three times said, "Now he belongs to the ages," that he heard now.

Would it speak, as before, three times?

As he questioned he heard the words again, uttered with a vital fervor that penetrated the core of his consciousness.

Before, the creeping chill that came not of cold, and the mysterious Voice that seemed to sound from nowhere into everywhere, had come in connection with the passing of the soul of Abraham Lincoln. So it had seemed, to him then —or was it all imagination?

Just a few feet from where he lay there was a little knoll on which a couple of maples grew, their silvery trunks ashy grey in the dim morning light and their budding

boughs showing like phantom trees against the darker shadows back of them.

As the chill, against which the thick cape would not protect him, was causing cold perspiration to form on the brow of the disturbed man, he felt his eyes turning slowly, as if moved in their sockets by unseen fingers. Toward this thicket they were turned and there they were held while he saw gathering into shape from a misty etheric substance that seemed to come from the shadows, the outlines of a human form.

As the form of the apparition became more defined, the facial lines stood out. Furrows marked sunken cheeks.

There were eyes, deep set and sorrowful. And it stood. And his eyes were fastened upon it, nor could he turn away.

For the moment he stared mute. He leaned forward, his hands held against his heart as if to warm it or keep it from beating out and he spoke, words uttered mechanically but not without reverence as well as awe.

"Angels and ministers of grace defend us. Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned? Bringest with thee airs from heaven or blasts from hell? How comest thou?"

He listened—would the intense silence be broken?

"WITH MALICE TOWARD NONE; WITH CHARITY FOR ALL."

The words were those of Abraham Lincoln. In the front ranks of an innumerable throng at the inaguration of a President, the man on the tobacco leaf bed had heard them. They had been cheered that day. But in his heart he had said, "The damned liar. His every executive act is one of malice." Words of the dead Lincoln they were but seeming now the most vitally alive words he had ever heard uttered.

Yet they did not come from the apparition. Indeed,

no sound came from the awe inspiring and seemingly kindly ghost. In silence he had come. Silent he stood and silently he passed as a faint mist passes at touch of sunshine.

"The Spirit! The mysterious Voice! What is their connection? Is there any connection? Did a ghost stand there?" Arising Boyd stepped toward the knoll on which the grey maples stood. "Was there a Voice? Perhaps it is all part of a dream—an Easter dream for this is Easter morning."

It was yet early morning. He lay again on his bed of leaves. But he did not sleep. He thought of the anniversary day so forcefully and weirdly brought to his attention.

A few days before and Washington had been planning for the biggest, gladdest Easter ever known in its history. Peace was to be celebrated—the peace of the risen Prince of Peace with the gay colors of flags and flowers everywhere.

But Easter joy had been turned to mourning, by the act of one man. Somewhere in the White House there was a coffin and in that coffin the still body of President Abraham Lincoln lay. And the flowers that had bloomed had been for his burying instead of his rejoicing.

This line of thought was distinctly unpleasant, something to be put resolutely away.

Daylight came and the rising sun, for the clouds had spent themselves.

As the rays of light fell over the trees and bushes and vines of this quiet place, a million sparkles shone on the tender green. In quiet corners that had seemed only retreats for shadows, saxifrage came into view holding its silvery head above its pale green velvet leaves, and on the

little knolls spring beauties stood like fairies stuck into pin cushions of vivid green. Birds sang and the heart of the man responded to the joy and fragrance of the new day.

"Wake up," Boyd said shaking Herold. "Get your bearings and let us move on toward Coxe's. The day is ours."

Boyd watched Herold as from the thicket he surveyed the country lying about. That Herold had lost his bearings he knew before he said as much.

CHAPTER VIII

FUGITIVES

EASTER SUNDAY was spent by Herold and his lame companion in wandering about the swamp. Travel at best for Boyd was slow, and several times they had concealed themselves and waited a considerable time, frightened by some unaccounted for noise.

Long before night the two men were almost too tired to travel and felt hungry enough to eat anything that might offer itself in the food line. Expecting to reach Coxe's early Sunday morning they had taken no provisions except a small flask of liquor carried by Boyd.

It was not until Monday afternoon about five o'clock that the two men at last reached the Coxe plantation, Herold swearing he was starved and Boyd almost too faint to complain. Here they expected to be fed and housed until they could get in touch with Confederate officers who were to give them aid in continuing their escape to a place of safety.

The expectation of being welcome at the Coxe place was never realized, however, for the men were not as much as allowed to come close to the house, Mr. Coxe himself denying them the request.

"But Coxe," Boyd protested, "this was to be a stopping place. You knew it; you offered it yourself."

"I know this was to be a stopping place when you kidnapped him. But I never reckoned on being party to any assassination much as I hoped the other plan would be successful."

"I'm starved—haven't had a bite since Saturday night and my leg gives me torment."

"I'm sorry but you cannot come into the house. Don't you know what it would mean to me if you were found in my house? Every point along the way will be under suspicion, every place watched."

"What do you propose? To turn me over to the Yankee soldiers?"

"No, I'm going to help you escape. Your chances are a thousand times better out of my house than in it. You know that. I'll have my hired man take you to a safe hiding place and give you food and blankets to sleep on. He has no wife or children to suffer if he should be discovered befriending you. He is an honest fellow and for a little pay he will serve you well. I'll have him show you a safe place and you can make any arrangements for service with him. Don't be afraid. He's trusty."

The man was summoned, introduced to Boyd and Herold and told that they were Confederates trying to get through to Mosby's camp below Bowling Green.

"Take them down behind the cut-over pasture in that pine woods," Mr. Coxe said. "It's a hard place to get to unless one knows the way over the bog at the far end and there are safe hiding places in the berry tangles just beyond. Your time can be given to these gentlemen. Do your best for Boyd."

"I got into trouble—stole a Yankee's officer's horse," Boyd explained. "They're after me hot-footed and I will not feel safe until I get to General Mosby's camp. What I want you to do is to make the trip to Bowling Green with a sealed message I will give you. If you will get me safely over to Bowling Green I will pay you three hundred dollars —give you a sixty pound check on a Canadian bank. I do not carry so much money."

The generous amount offered a man who at best expected but a few dollars, was accepted with a willingness that caused Booth to smile, and in the retreat which the man

conducted him to, plans were talked over and Boyd wrote the message which he expected would secure for him a safe conduct beyond the point of danger.

That same night the hired man, called "Jimmie" by Boyd left on his important journey.

While he was gone, a man named Jones, who had married the sister of Mr. Coxe, moved by pity for Boyd and in sympathy with his act, provided the two men with food and papers. Boyd was especially interested in reading news of the assassination of the President, the pursuit of the fugitives and all other matters pertaining to the same.

The first printed matter that came into the hands of Boyd was the announcement of rewards offered for the capture of President Lincoln's murderer. As if they were rising to smite him in the face, the bold black letters looked as his eye first beheld them.

With hurried glance he read:—

WAR DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON APRIL 20, 1865

$100,000 REWARD

THE MURDERER

OF OUR LATE BELOVED PRESIDENT ABRAHAM LINCOLN

IS STILL AT LARGE

$50,000 REWARD

WILL BE PAID BY THIS DEPARTMENT FOR HIS APPREHENSION IN ADDITION TO ANY REWARD OFFERED BY MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES OR STATE EXECUTIVES

$25,000 REWARD

WILL BE PAID FOR THE APPREHENSION OF JOHN SURRATT, ONE OF BOOTH'S ACCOMPLICES

$25,000 REWARD

WILL BE PAID FOR THE APPREHENSION OF DANIEL C. HARROLD, ANOTHER OF BOOTH'S ACCOMPLICES

LIBERAL REWARDS will be paid for any information that shall conduce to the arrest of either of the above-named criminals or their accomplices.

All persons harboring or secreting the said persons or either of them, or aiding their concealment or escape, will be treated as accomplices in the murder of the President and the attempted assassination of the Secretary of State, and shall be subject to trial before Military Commission and the punishment of DEATH.

Let the stain of innocent blood be removed from the land by the arrest and punishment of the murderers.

All good citizens are exhorted to aid public justice on this occasion. Every man should consider his own conscience charged with the solemn duty, and rest neither night nor day until it be accomplished.

EDWIN M. STANTON, SECRETARY OF WAR.

Description—Booth is 5 feet 7 or 8 inches high, slender build, high forehead, black hair and black eyes, and wears a heavy black moustache.

John H. Surratt is about 5 feet 9 inches. Hair rather thin and dark, eyes rather light, no beard. Would weigh 145 or 150 pounds. Complexion rather pale and clear with color in his cheeks. Wore light clothes of fine quality. Shoulders square, cheek bones rather prominent; chin narrow; ears projecting at the top, forehead rather low and square, but broad. Parts his hair on the right side; neck rather long. His lips are firmly set. A slim man.

Daniel C. Harrold is 23 years of age, 5 feet 6 or 7 inches high, rather broad shouldered, otherwise light built; dark hair, little (if any) moustache; dark eyes; weighs about 140 pounds.

"Booth wears a heavy black moustache," Boyd said to Herold after a careful reading of the reward notices. "John Surratt was about right when he referred to the Federal Detective Department as 'a bunch of asses'," and he ran his finger across his smooth upper lip.

"Asses or no asses, $100,000. Heavens! What a lot of money! What wouldn't a man do to get it?"

"And $100,000 is not all but 'in addition to any other rewards offered.' It may be $200,000 before the murderer is caught or $1,000,000 and it's a free for all. 'All good citizens are exhorted to give aid'," and he turned his eyes again to the black and staring letters. "More, 'any persons concealing or aiding or helping conceal the outlaws will be tried before a Military Commission and punished by death.' Unnecessary to mention the penalty if the trial is to be before a lot of blood thirsty Yankees. The war is over. The country is not under martial law. Why not let even a law breaker have the constitutional rights of a trial by jury? Why this Military Commission?"

"Does it make any difference to you what kind of a trial you get? It doesn't to me. The only kind of a trial I want is *no* trial. Suppose they catch us. It seems like a long way to Spain."

"Spain!" and Boyd smiled broadly. "You're not there yet, that's a fact."

"This waiting—it's enough to drive a fellow crazy. I want to run."

"Which way? Into the muzzle of a blue jacket's gun? Three days is a long time to hide in the grass like a snake. But our man can not get back in less time and everything now depends on him."

"This man 'Jimmie'—do you think he's different from other men?"

"What do you mean?"

"Don't you suppose he likes money as well as the rest of us?"

"I think so. That's the reason I offered him three hundred dollars to get us safely to Mosby's. Three hundred is a big sum for a man that's had nothing."

"Not as big as $100,000, is it? Suppose he sees one of those hell-printed posters you've just been reading? Suppose he wants to make his money easy? Have you any guarantee he is friend enough to you to lose that $100,000?"

"Friend of mine? I never heard of him before. Don't know what his name is, sounded like Jimmie. But Jones —Jones belongs to the Order. So does Coxe and, while they might try to save their own necks first, mine would come next. I am satisfied they know our man or they would not take any chances."

When Jones came to the outlaws that night with food the matter of Jimmie's loyalty to his task for Boyd was discussed with full assurance that he would not betray the two men. He was a Confederate with a loyalty that Yankee money could not purchase.

Jones suggested that Boyd and Herold move their hiding place to a point further down the stream called Dent's Meadow, as a boat could more easily be hidden there to take them across the Potomac when Jimmie returned to start them on their perilous journey to the Rappahannock.

It was the fourth day after he started to Bowling Green that Jimmie arrived at Dent's Meadow—Friday night just one week after the assassination.

"Everything is ready," he reported. "There will be a small boat here tonight left by a fisherman. Get in it and leaving the Maryland side go south until you come to Machodoc Creek. Turn in there. I will be waiting for you. The Queensberrys and Dr. Stuart, loyal to the Cause, live in this neighborhood. We can get food at either place then make our way across country between Edge Hill and

Shiloh and reach the ferry at Port Conway. Here Lieutenants Ruggles and Bainbridge from Bowling Green, Virginia, will meet you and see that you get to Mosby's safely."

Having all details of the plan given them, Boyd and Herold anxiously awaited the dark. The boat they knew was waiting, for they had heard the soft plash of waters just at twilight.

The night was inky black. The boat, found with some difficulty was small and when pushed out on the water rowed with difficulty owing to the caution with which it was necessary to use the oars to avoid notice, and the tide which was running in strong.

Neither of the men were boatsmen. When they had been on the water for what seemed hours with never the sight of the mouth of a creek, a match was lit under a hat and Boyd's watch was consulted.

"Nine o'clock," he said, "and we only had five miles to go. It seems we have traveled ten and no creek yet. We must be lost."

"Let's go a little farther. Maybe we're right at it."

So in the dark and the silence they were afraid to break by a spoken word, they went on and on, until at last they came to the wide black mouth of a creek.

They pushed in carefully and waited. They called "Jimmie," softly, and waited again.

The thin moon came up behind a bank of trees and a few stars shone between overspread clouds.

"He's not here," Herold whispered anxiously. "Maybe it's a trap we're in."

"Who knows this is the right place? If this is Machodoc Creek is is the longest five miles I ever traveled. We must find out."

While they hesitated a dim light appeared through the growth along the edge of the creek.

The men sat motionless, scarce daring to breathe, their eyes on the light.

But it came nearer and when they heard a bit of camp meeting song they decided the light came from a negro cabin and Herold was dispatched to learn where their little boat had brought them.

In a very short time he was back with the news that they had reached Nanjemo Creek, twelve miles above their destination.

The way back was not easy, but moved by the fear of missing Jimmie, they made all possible haste and reached the place where he was waiting about eleven o'clock.

In another half hour Dr. Stuart's house was reached. But this gentleman, like Mr. Coxe, was afraid to entertain Boyd whose identity he, as well as Coxe and Jones, knew. So he sent him and his companion on to a negro named William Lucas where Boyd was given the only bed in the cabin because he was a lame soldier, while Jimmie and Herold slept on the porch, and the old negro and his wife crawled in some straw in the wagon bed.

From the cabin of William Lucas, which was not far from the main road the distance to the Rappahannock was along a public highway where travel for two such notorious fugitives from the law would be extremely hazardous.

Explaining that soldiers were after him and might catch him before he crossed the next river should they come upon him, Boyd told the old negro he would pay him ten dollars to take him to the ferry under a wagon load of such household effects as the aged ex-slave could collect.

The trade was readily made and the negro was ready for Boyd's directions.

"Put plenty of straw in the bottom, clean straw for I must lie flat in it until you get to the ferry, and mind old man, don't you forget and speak to me. When I get in put slats or boards over the wagon bed. Then put your

sides on and pile your chairs and your table and your splint baskets on top. You have chickens. Get up a few and put them in a coop on the back and then drape bed-quilts over the pile. Hitch those two old horses to it, get your hound under the back end, your wife on the seat beside you and start for Port Conway. If anybody asks you where you are going, tell them to a plantation below Port Conway."

Jimmie and Herold were to follow the wagon at some distance and on foot.

CHAPTER IX

BEYOND THE DANGER LINE

It was six o'clock in the morning when the journey was begun—a slow journey it was to be for the horses were little more than articulated bones and the wheels of the wagon rolled four ways at once. The Confederate officers who were to meet Boyd at the Port Royal side of the ferry would be there at two o'clock.

The journey was made without interruption until the ferry was reached. The boat was on the Port Conway side waiting and just as the old negro neared it he shouted, "Dar's dem sojars now!"

The heart of the tired man lying flat in the straw all but jumped out the bottom of the old wagon. The more especially was he excited when the basket of chickens was suddenly pulled from the wagon, the back end knocked out and he was seized by the legs and literally dragged from his hiding place.

But it was Jimmie and Herold who dragged him out and the soldiers the negro saw were Lieutentants Ruggles and Bainbridge and Captain Jett.[1] The officers had an extra horse for Boyd and told him they would take him to the home of a man named Garrett about three miles north of the public road crossing the Rappahannock where they had made arrangements for him to stay a short time, and which place they would watch until he was safely away from it.

Herold and Jimmie were to go on to Bowling Green with Captain Jett on foot to get a shoe for Boyd's lame foot, he having worn an old slipper in place of the boot which was cut off his foot and left at Dr. Mudd's. They were to meet Boyd at Garrett's the next afternoon.

[1] See testimony of Wm. P. Jett, Conspiracy Trial, p. 57.

It was not until Boyd came to pay Jimmie, before he started to Bowling Green, that he missed several letters and photographs, part of a diary, a pocket compass and several other small items which had shaken from his coat pocket during his long rough ride or had come out when he had been so unceremoniously jerked by the legs.

"You will not mind going back after them, will you Jimmie?" Boyd asked. "The old nigger is yet on the other side. You will find them in the straw. They would prove good evidence to a warm trail should they fall into the hands of the Yankees and might draw a noose around the old nigger's neck. Slip them into your pocket and unless you run into danger of being searched, hand them to me when you come to Garrett's tomorrow. Look especially for the photographs. One of them I'll pay money to get."

Boyd's request was promptly granted and Jimmie recrossed the river in an old batteau boat. Boyd and the Confederate officers being too much exposed, rode off in the direction of Garrett's home.

At the Garrett home the man brought in by the Confederate officers was introduced as John William Boyd, a Confederate soldier who had been wounded in the battles around Richmond. They asked Mr. Garrett to take care of him until Wednesday morning when they would call for him.

The Garretts found Boyd agreeable but not talkative. Many soldiers stopped at the Garrett place. Most of them talked freely. Boyd was not inclined that way. They supposed it was because he had not wholly recovered from the wound in his leg which made him slightly lame. He went to bed early. At breakfast he seemed rested and gave them some bits of description of Richmond in whose defense he said he had been wounded.

During the morning, one of the Garrett boys who had gone to get a boot mended, returned bringing a Richmond paper announcing a reward of $150,000 for the capture of Booth.

"Big reward," the Garrett boy said. "I'd like to have some of it."

"Did you ever see Booth?" Boyd asked.

"No. Did you?"

"Once in Richmond."

"Is he young or old?"

"He didn't look very old."

"If I had an idea which way he'd gone I'd get into the search. I've got a good horse."

"Lieutenant Ruggles told me yesterday the murderer had been arrested between Baltimore and Philadelphia."

"No use getting into the hunt then," the boy said. And this ended the conversation about Booth.

It was about two o'clock the afternoon of that same day that Boyd was called to the gate by Lieutenants Ruggles and Bainbridge, who had ridden up hurriedly.[2]

"A squad of Yankee troops has just crossed the Rappahannock"[3] he was told in whispered tones.

"After me?"

"They are on your track."

"What shall I do?"

"Leave here immediately. Back in the woods to the north of this place there is a heavily timbered ravine. Follow my eyes. I will turn them in the direction you must go. Get it?" and the other officer in grey turned his eyes on Boyd's face.

"Yes—I can find it."

"Anybody here suspect who you are?"

"Do not seem to."

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[2] See Baker's report of the capture of John Wilkes Booth.

[3] Baker's troops according to his account.

"Anybody here ever see the actor Booth—John Wilkes?"

"The conversation turned on this subject and I asked that question. None of them has seen him—did not even know whether he is young or old."

"Where are they now?"

"The women are in the house, I suppose, and the men out on the place somewhere. Not suspecting anything they are not watching me."

"Slip away as quietly as possible. We will return for you in an hour with a good horse. Keep well out of sight until you hear this signal call—hold your ear."

Boyd stepped to the side of the horse. With his hands around his mouth the officer gave a soft call. The next minute the two of them were away.

Leisurely, as if he were just taking a walk and because his lame ankle would not permit of rapid travel Boyd turned his face in the direction of the woods which he gained without seeing or hearing anyone. Here he rested and anxiously awaited the coming of his friends.

Inside of an hour the signal call was heard and the Confederate officers with a fresh mount for Boyd, were ready to accompany him on a hazardous ride.

Turning in a westerly direction the three men rode the rest of the afternoon and until midnight when they dismounted and rested themselves and their horses until daylight.

At daylight the officers rode yet a little farther with Boyd. When they at last separated at a quiet country road they were twenty-five miles from the Garrett place.

Shortly after daylight the officers told Boyd they would go back to guard his escape from the other end. If pressed for any information they would suggest Mosby's Camp as the logical destination of the assassin. They gave him full

direction for continuing his journey and presented him with the horse which he had offered to pay for.

With a last word of good luck they turned back and Boyd hastened on to the West. All that day and until night he rode. Then, completely exhausted he sought lodging at a little home of three old ladies who were delighted to serve him when they heard he was a Confederate soldier and had been wounded in defense of Richmond.

After a good night's rest he pushed on to the Southwest spending his second night in a creek bottom.

Across West Virginia he made haste, crossing Big Sandy at Warfield in Eastern Kentucky and from there went to Tennessee where, when he had gained the sparsely inhabited mountains, the fugitive felt he had passed beyond the danger line.

CHAPTER X

"SPOOKS IS SCRIPTURAL"

THE balmy sun of a May day afternoon falling on the freshly garbed mountains of East Tennessee turned their foliage dresses into shimmering satin adorned at unmeasured intervals with graceful touches of dog-wood lace, white and filmy as rare needlework. Here and there also feathery splotches of the rose-pink of the Judas tree nestled against variegated green, like corsage bouquets—and over it all a boundless canopy of unclouded blue.

Against a ledge, around which a dim road turned on a shoulder of one of the mountains, a horseman reined his steed and paused to look out over the gleaming valley.

The way had been circuitous and rough. By the attitude of horse and rider both were weary.

As the two rested, pictured like a bit of sculpture against the blue above and the green beneath, a mountaineer driving a goat came around the bend.

At sight of the horseman he stopped, nodded and said, "Howdy."

"Good afternoon. Can you tell me how far I must go before finding lodgement for the night?"

"You're right at it. A mile or better further and you come to Sojer Tom Willsin's place."

"Soldier? Which side was he on?"

"Sojer Tom's a soldier of the cross and aims his licks at the devil instead of at his feller man. But he has three all fired fightin' sons that's in the war. The oldest of 'em just turned twenty-one. Them's boys to be proud of."

"Confederates I suppose."

The goat driver took a careful survey of the horseman before saying, "Stranger, you don't want to do no such

supposin' in these parts. It's a shootin' insult to a feller in this neck of the woods to be called a rebel. And we don't call them damn Union busters 'Confederate' neither. There's something decent sounding about that word that don't belong to what wears it no more than a clean coat belongs on a rotten carcass. Get my meaning?"

"To be sure. I understand how you feel. But being a stranger and just out of a state where every other man's a rebel and proud of it, I didn't know."

"Whar you from?"

"I just left Kentucky."

"Whar you goin'?"

"I'm on my way to Arkansas to join Clayton's Militia. You've heard of General Clayton of the Union Army."

"Naw. Can't say as I ever heard tell of the general. But Sojer Tom will know who you are talkin' about. He can read. Takes a paper that comes every week and reads every word of it. He's read the paper tellin' about the shootin' of Abe Lincoln four times, and every time he reads it he gits madder and madder. He's waitin' now fer the paper to hear if the red handed murderer has been caught and helpin' all he can by prayin' night and mornin' that God A'mighty will uncover his hidin' place to them as is huntin' him. He goes to the woods to do his prayin' and you can hear him hollerin' a mile when he gets het up. Pete Rubers that lives across on the next spur told Sojer Tom if that murderer was hidin' anywhere in these hills he'd hear how his hide's to be blasted and his soul to be damned—and escape again."

"You do not think the man who assassinated the President is anywhere in these mountains do you?"

"We don't call them as creeps up in the back to do their shootin' a 'man.' And we don't think he's in these mountains. If we did we'd have a cleanin'. Only three strangers has come into this trail the past week. You're

one. The other two wasn't this Booth—and I don't reckon you are. Go on to Tom's. He's got hog meat, a fresh cow and more good corn likker than any man between here and Big Bend. If he takes a likin' to you, the barrel's yourn."

"Thank you, sir—thank you. I'm glad to know I'm in a Union neighborhood."

The horseman had rounded the curve when he stopped and listened closely. Satisfied the goat driver had passed on down the roadway, he dismounted. He walked back and scanned the open way. He looked cautiously ahead. When satisfied that he was alone in the solitary place, he drew a closely-folded Confederate cape from under his saddle. On the ground he unrolled it to roll it around a wayside stone. When securely weighed he threw it over the edge of the roadway and listened as it pushed its way through branches of leaves and brush.

"It served me well," he said when the stirring leaves had settled back motionless. "But a friend turned enemy is ever deadliest. I am a Union soldier—Robert Jones. I have been in a hospital. I love the name of Lincoln. To shoot down the red handed murderer that removed this saviour from the earth as one shoots a mad dog would give me joy."

The first thing the tired horseman saw as he stood at the open door of Tom Willsin's mountain cabin, was a large picture of President Lincoln over the rude stone fireplace. It was an old campaign picture crude and faded. Stretched across the top and hanging down the sides was a drape of something black.

The questions put to the stranger when he asked for lodging were the same the goat driver had asked. Who was he? Where did he come from?

The compelling honesty with which the young Union soldier answered Tom's question won the confidence of

the mountaineer and the appealing eyes and crippled leg lay a strong hold on his sympathy.

"Damn dirty rebels!" the old man exclaimed. "Betty," to a young woman who had appeared, "git some licker. This here young feller's about petered out."

This hospitality having been arranged for, Sojer Tom was ready with more questions on a subject of vital importance.

"Have you heard yit if they've caught the red handed murderer of Abe Lincoln?"

"No, I haven't heard."

"I'll git the papers two days hence and if the imp of hell has been caught my paper'll tell about it."

"You read about the assassination?"

"Yeh. I went to Big Bend and got the paper. It told how Abe was at a show and a human devil named Booth sneaked in behind him like a blasted coward and put a bullet in his brain, then got onto a horse, rode off and hid. The paper said the whole town of Washington was draped with black. I don't see where they ever got enough black calico to make them big buildings all black. But that's what it said.

"So I says to Abner Miller what runs the store, 'Give me some black calico. Next to Jesus Christ there hasn't never a man lived so close kin to God A'mighty as Abe Lincoln. I've got his picture and I'm goin' to drape it with black same as if I was in Washington.'

"But Abner said he hadn't had no black calico since my wife, Sally Lu, bought her mourning apron fer her pa's funeral. That was three years before she died and she's been gone three years so you see they wasn't much chance of gettin' any black calico from Abner.

"After Sally Lu was buried I boxed her wearin' things up. Her black calico apron was worn right smart but I put it away and there it stayed till it was time to mourn

for Honest Abe Lincoln and I couldn't get no other. So I got it out, split it and made the mournin' you see. What do you think of it?"

"I think if President Lincoln could see it he would be pleased."

"How do you know he can't? Ever think about that? Ever think of the other part of a man besides the skin and bones you can see? I aint casting no reflections on your larnin' but there's a heap of folks that thinks when a man's shot or burned up with fever, that's the last of him. They don't know nothin' about the part that lead can't make holes in nor fire turn into ashes."

"You speak of what is called the soul."

"That's right. According to scripture the Almighty made the carcass out of dirt. Then he breathed into the thing he made and it was a living soul on top of being dirt made. Now, young man, tell me this. How's a body going to kill that soul part what's the livin' breath of the Almighty. Thar's Abe Lincoln with the biggest soul God ever breathed into one human. Here comes this imp of hell named Booth and shoots him and it's dollars to doughnuts he thought he was killing Abe. If he'd taken into account the soul he would sooner have chopped his hand off with a dull meat ax than held a pistol to Abe Lincoln's head, for as certain as God Almighty sets on his throne, if the law don't get hold of that murderer and break his neck he'll be haunted till his death bed by the man he killed."

"You believe in ghosts then?"

"Call them ghosts if you want to. Some like ghosts better than spooks. I call 'em spooks. Haven't you studied your Bible enough to know spooks is scriptural?"

" 'Spooks is scriptural'," Robert Jones repeated.

"That's what I said and what I can back up with scriptures. Betty," and he motioned to the young woman who

came in with a gallon crock and a gourd dipper, "set the licker by this young feller's chair. He's lookin' sort of puny—thanks to them damn rebels."

The crock was placed on the floor and the gourd dipper laid carefully across the top.

Sojer Tom dipped into the jar, emptied the dipper down his throat, took a broad sweep across his mouth with the back of his weather-beaten hand and was ready to enlighten his young guest on the occult mysteries of the Scriptures.

"Did you ever stop to think what sort it was as has appeared to the folks what the Bible tells about? It was angels. 'Angels' is the scriptural word for ghosts and spooks and sperrets. Are you this far with me?"

"I suppose a spook might be taken for an angel—that is if it was a nice-mannered spook."

"Manners or no manners, them angels was the same as spooks is today or sperrets if you like the word better. There was that feller named Manoah. Ever hear of Manoah? A heap of people hasn't. Well Manoah's wife had done got past the age when wimmen brings forth their young, and everybody in their settlement was pokin' sport at Manoah for not bein' pa to nothin'. Manoah's wife felt the disgrace she brought on her old man and used to go to the church and pray and shed tears. Are you this far with me?"

"Yes. We are at the church with Manoah's wife."

"Keep close on my trail. I'm tellin' you some gospel truth. One day, along toward evening, when this woman was in the church, one of these here angels came plain as day. His looks was surprisin' but what he said was a heap more so, for he didn't do nothin' but tell that woman she was goin' to bring forth a son."

"The spirit spoke did he?"

"That's what the Bible says. There's a heap of people

don't believe the Bible though on this point. This woman's old man, Manoah, he didn't believe a word of it, thought his old woman was goin' crazy. But the woman knew. When a body once meets a spook face to face, the real thing, they *know it*. Are you this far with me?"

"Right with you. When a person meets a spirit—a real ghost, they *know* it."

"You git my point. Let's go on. A second time this angel came and spoke to Manoah's old woman and a second time he thought her crazy as a betsy bug. Then she went down to the water hole to wash—kind of a shady place like under trees. Old man Manoah was working in the field. While she was slappin' her wet clothes on the rock her eyes was turned toward the shadders and there she saw that same ghost for the third time. She called Manoah."

"Did the ghost wait for him to get there?"

"So the Scriptures state. When Manoah arrived, there in the shadders of them trees stood that angel. Manoah asked him if he was the same one as had been talkin' to his old woman? He said he was. He told Manoah his old woman would have a son and his name would be called Sampson. You've hear of Sampson, haven't you?"

"The strong man who tied the foxes' tails together?"

"That's the same Sampson. You see by this testimony spooks is scriptural?"

"Where about in the Bible is this story?"

Soldier Tom arose and from the mantel shelf took down a book opened it and fingered the pages.

"Here it is. It's in Judges, chapter thirteen. Want to read it?"

"No I just wanted to know. It's a strange story. Do they often come three times—these Bible spooks?"

"Not so often but sometimes they come in swarms. The Book tells no number but Jacob saw enough to stand up and down a ladder. Old father Abraham, the one Abe

Lincoln was named after, he saw three at one time and wasn't scared to death either. If anybody these days that was to see more than one they'd throw a fit."

"Did the people who saw these Bible spirits ever know who they saw?"

"You don't mean to say nobody has told you about the Witch of Endors?" and there was surprise in Sojer Tom's voice.

"Witch of Endors," Robert Jones repeated. "I have heard of several witches but this special witch—I don't recall her."

"What witches do you know about?"

"Those that called up the black spirits and white, red spirits and grey."

"What was the feller's name what wrote about them colored sperrits? By Heck, I've learned something."

"Shakespeare."

"Shakespeare—Shakespeare," and Sojer Tom knit his forehead and studied. "It don't sound familiar. I've read this here Book from lid to lid and preached out of it many a long year and I don't recall readin' nothin' about Shakespeare."

"He's not in the Bible."

"What's he in?"

"His own book. He wrote a big book."

"Angels and spooks in it?"

"It's full of them—as full as you say the Bible is. Apparitions, spirits, ghosts—all such things. It was his witches I had in mind. Tell me about this Witch of Endor?"

"She could call up the dead—sperrits you call 'em—bring 'em out of their hidin' places wherever it was. One night King Saul went down to her place to ask what luck he would have in a big fight he was gettin' into. It was the ghost of Samuel the witch called up. Maybe you think

Saul wasn't scared stiff when the ghost of Samuel stood before him."

"The ghost looked like Samuel?"

"No sonny, the ghost WAS Samuel. It was his form. And the voice that spoke was the voice of Samuel. Gettin' over into the New Testament it's chock full of sperrits and ghosts. It was one of them appeared to Mary and told her she was goin' to bring forth without no natural pa for her offspring. One let Peter out of jail. Three appeared at a time on top of a mountain. And I take it if you're not a plum heathen you've heard about the two ghosts that was standin' at the empty tomb on Easter mornin'—them two that said, 'Why seek the livin' among the dead.' There's plenty of them. The Bible teaches the air is full of them."

"Does the Bible teach this?"

"What else do you make of Elisha's vision? Poor old soul was growlin' about not havin' any help in doin' the Lord's work and his eyes was opened so he saw the air full of horses and chariots—fiery like."

"That was a long time ago."

"Yes. But what was goin' on then in the air is goin' on yet. Mighty near the same thing's happened in this war. A lot of soldiers and other people not soldiers saw it. It was October 4th at Runger's Hill about four miles east of Percy's. I read it first in the paper. After that I seen two men that seen it. It started in the valley when all of a sudden out of the shadders they commenced comin' these spook men, thousands of them all marchin' in the same direction thirty or forty men wide. They was movin' pretty spry—double quick time. To one side of the valley was a steep mountain. Looked like a goat couldn't climb it, much less a human critter. But up this mountain these forms of men started movin' stoopin' over like men does climbin' a steep place. Their arms and legs movin' plain

as day. They didn't break step and there wasn't no stragglers. They was all white like and didn't carry no guns neither."

"You say a number of people saw this? How do you account for it?"

"I don't give no account. Twenty people saw it—none of them drunk nor blind. They didn't give no account particular. But I suppose it was the spooks of the fellers that had been killed in the valley that was ascendin'. The scales fell from the eyes of 'em as saw 'em for a minute same as they did from Elisha's when he saw the chariots and soldiers."

"Strange," was the only comment of Robert Jones.

"Sounds like you might not believe it. Don't happen to be a Hard Shell do you? There's a Hard Shell settlement over on Flat Top Mountain. They don't believe ghosts is ever seen let alone believe spooks is scriptural. I preached over there after Sallie Lu's spook come back. I felt like if I didn't preach the gospel that 'spooks is scriptural' I'd be struck dumb. I read them twenty scriptures where angels and ghosts and spooks and sperrits come back. I told 'em it wasn't no use to say you believe the Scriptures and throw out what you don't want to believe. I went so fur as to tell 'em exactly how Sallie Lu come back. Still they didn't believe. So I left the ignorant hogs to wallow in their own mire."

CHAPTER XI

THE APPARITION AGAIN

"You say your wife came back to you?" Robert Jones questioned after a moment's reflection.

"She sure did, sonny. See this here cut on this here floor board? It's a little dark in this corner but here's the spot. Come see."

Robert Jones followed Sojer Tom who had gone to a corner of the room and was now bending toward the floor.

"Here it is. See this cross line? Her feet was on it."

"And she really came back?"

"Say, young feller," and the tall mountaineer straightened up and stepped close to the slender young man, "you don't doubt my word do you?"

"Not a bit. I was just getting ready to ask if you would mind telling me about it."

"Let's set again. It's a part of my gospel to tell it. Before the returnin' there was the goin' away and it was more curious than the comin' back. Sallie Lu, she was an Appleby, and the Applebys used to set at a table that would wiggle around. They said sperrits moved it. I never took no stock in that but we didn't quarrel about it. When Sallie Lu took to her bed she told me if she didn't git out no more and there was a way to come back she'd let me know if she still was livin' after she shed her poor old body. We shook hands on her promise. One night after she'd been havin' a bad spell she got easier and them as was watchin' lay down on a pallet to git a bit of sleep, all but me. I was settin' right there in this chair. Sallie Lu was quiet—fust time in days. I was about to shut my eyes and git some sleep when them same eyes was turned

to the bed and there they was glued, glued is what I'm sayin'. And what I seen! Somethin' thinner than mist and lighter than feathers, somethin' without no shape of no kind was movin' just above her body. It moved like it was fastened someway and was tryin' to blow itself away. I never seen nothin' like it. I though maybe her disease was leavin' her she lay so quiet. And the thing—what really wasn't no thing and I don't have no word to tell what it was, moved softer than a baby's breath, pullin' gentle like at something that held it. Then of a sudden it got itself loose and lifted up and floated—moved away into the shadder and was gone. I waited a minute to see if it was comin' back. Then I went to Sallie Lu. There wasn't breath left in her body. And I says 'That was the soul of her—the part God breathed in and it's gone and I seen it go.' The first night after she was buried I started lookin' fer her. But she didn't come and after I'd looked a month then I thought it was all a vision and didn't look no more. Then one night when a year had gone the fire had burned low and I was settin' here thinkin' something turned my eyes to that spot and thar I saw Sallie Lu. It didn't look like my old woman nor nobody at first but for the world like the stuff that was floatin' over her when she died. It took her shape. I seen it but don't know how it was done. Then thar she stood, Sallie Lu, same as if she was livin' only the hollers didn't show in her cheeks and her stoop shoulders was up straight."

"Did she say anything?" There was keen interest in the question.

"That she did. She says to me, I've been around here every day the whole year tryin' to make you see me and you couldn't. But you see me now, don't you old man?' I kin hear them words yit."

"Did it sound like her voice?" Again the interest.

"Can't say it did. The words was hern but the voice I— haint never figgered out whar that voice come from."

For a few moments there was silence. Then the young man asked another question.

"Do they always come from shadows, these ghosts—these spirits?"

"Never heard of none that didn't, and I've figgered out the reason. It's scriptural also. You recollect the scriptures tells about the valley of the shadder? Don't recollect? The valley of the shadder of death. Those that die git in the shadder of death. And horse sense tells us what they get into, that's what they come out from. Anyhow they come. But say sonny, a crippled soldier that's come a long way and about petered out needs to be bedded. We'll eat a snack and then you kin turn in. You kin sleep on Sallie Lu's bed. I don't reckon you're afraid of ghosts —least ways Sallie Lu's. Some is. But them that is, is ignorant as pigs or else they've done some crime. Fellers like you and me what tends our own honest bizness, makes straight whiskey and preaches to sinners and fights fer the Union's got no occasion to be afraid of ghosts. It's the only feather bed we got and that crippled leg of yourn needs something softer than a quilt on the floor."

Robert Jones assured his host he was not afraid of the ghost of Sallie Lu or any other but it was not without some misgivings that he rested his form on the bed where the soul of Sallie Lu had left her lifeless body, and several times he cast his eyes to the place in the shadow where the marked floor recorded the spot of her spiritual return.

But his bones were weary. His leg pained. The bed was soft and clean and stretching his body he turned his face to an open window and drew in a long breath of satisfaction, such ease as bodily comfort and rest bring to a fear-troubled mind.

As he grew drowsy there came to him on the cool night

air a fragrance one that seemed an invitation to something just outside the window through which it floated. The perfume was familiar.

In a moment he was wide awake and recognized a desire to go out—out and find the lilacs.

He arose. Sojer Tom was snoring on the floor. The night was dark but guided by the perfume, he found the lilac bush. He brushed the clusters of blossoms, held his damp fingers to his nostrils and inhaled deeply. He closed his eyes. He heard the strains of a Strauss waltz. He saw again the beloved form of a woman. He felt the pressure of her body against his as he held her in his arms.

Pulling a branch of blossoms to him he buried his face in it, buried it until he crushed the tender leaves and petals, until his face and hair was bathed in its generous perfume.

"Bessie Hale," he whispered, "darling—my darling Bessie Hale. Will your heart still be bound to my heart though the world brand me with infamy?"

"Forever and forever."

The young man dropped the crushed blossoms and turned from the lilac bush.

Words! Where had they come from? They were the words of Bessie Hale. But she had not spoken them. It was the Voice. And what had this Voice that had before spoken in connection with the ghost, to do with Bessie Hale?

He felt himself growing chilly—that unearthy chilliness that seemed the property of some other world or condition. Twice before he had experienced it.

He glanced up quickly, expectantly.

There it was scarce an arm's length away—the tall figure standing in etheric majesty—the spirit of Lincoln.

The man caught his breath hard. Again he had the peculiar sensation of hearing his heart beat with a beating that seemed infinitely removed from him. His body was rigid, and fast in its step as a stone image.

He had a desire to speak. He heard his own voice. It too seemed as far removed from him as the place his heart was thumping.

"Stay illusion! If thou hast any sound or use of voice speak to me. The times have been that when the brains were out the man would die and there an end. But now they arise again—or seem to. A time before I saw—or thought I saw what now I see. Tell me, if you are real, tell me again the message that the other time you brought? How came you?

"With malice toward none—charity for all."

With staggering step the man beside the lilac moved back.

Again the words of the dead Lincoln. And again spoken by that mysterious Voice that in someway seemed connected with the ghost but was neither living nor dead.

He was back to the place where his heart beat and his own voice was close as his own lips when he said, "Son of the Holy Virgin! Is it true you come in pity and not to damn me?"

But the apparition was gone. The brooding silence was broken by the lone call of a whippoorwill. Into the valley a star fell from somewhere near the low horn of the new moon. The breath of a young breeze scattered the lilac perfume.

CHAPTER XII

THE CAPTURE OF BOOTH

As a rule the weekly arrival of "Sojer" Tom Willsin's newspaper caused little interest among the mountaineers in his vicinity. Few and far apart they lived in a world of their own. Beyond the bounds of their acquaintance the world was vague—almost unreal and its people different. The war had created an interest but, beyond news of the killing of rebels and the fate of the few men who had gone from their own mountains, even this interest never tempted a study of the printed sheet.

News of the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, however, had a different effect. The mountaineers gathered at the home of their leading mountaineer for news, discussion, and such a spirited community cursing of the assassin as would have taken place had one of their own clan been foully murdered in a bloody feud.

Half a day's journey was required in making the round trip from the nearest post office and it was well toward sunset when Tom Willsin returned to his home with the paper which was expected to contain news of the capture of John Wilkes Booth.

"You Jones!" he shouted to his guest who was sitting in a splint chair beside the door, "Here 'tis," and he held the paper over his head shaking it violently. "He's dead! Shot!"

The interest of Jones was unmistakable. He arose and held his hand for the paper which was given him, with the words, "You kin read caint ye?"

"Yes—I read a little."

"Be studyin' it out. They'll be comin' in 'fore long to git the news. It's a damn hard job fer me to git through

it the first time and this here's a long story. I'd ruther listen as to read if you kin git through it."

"I think I can make it," Jones answered eagerly opening the folded sheet.

"Git studyin' then so's to be ready when they gather in."

By the headlines, generous in the use of printer's ink, Jones learned that Booth had been shot in a burning barn by one of a squad sent out by direction of General L. C. Baker, Chief of the National Detective Police.

Here was a report from the highest authentic source—by its length a story in detail for it covered an entire page of the weekly news sheet.

Gathering twilight made reading impossible. By early candle light supper was eaten and it was around the rude table cleared of its dishes and supplied with relay candles, Jones read to as interested an audience as ever sat before metropolitan footlights. Rough these men were, ruggedly muscular, unlettered and unkempt but men of physical action as the sinews in the lean bodies told—keenly alive mentally by the eye-light gleaming under shaggy eye brows—a light that never wavered in interest as Jones read.

After some preliminary descriptive matter the real story was begun:—[1]

" 'Booth had been entirely lost since his departure from Mudd's house and it was believed that he had either pushed on for the Potomac or taken to the swamps. The officers sagaciously determined to follow him to the one and to explore the other.

" 'In the swamps tributary to the various branches of Wicomico River there are dense growths of dogwood, gum and beech, planted in sluices of water and bog, and their width varies from a half mile to four miles while their length is upward of sixteen miles. Frequent deep ponds

[1] From " Secret Service in the Late War," by Gen. L. C. Baker.

dot this wilderness place, with here and there a stretch of dry soil, but no human being inhabits the malarious extent; even a hunted murderer would shrink from hiding there. Serpents and slimy lizards are the only living denizens; sometimes the coon takes refuge in this desert from the hounds, and in the soft mud a thousand odorous muskrats delve, and now and then a tremulous otter. But not even a hunted negro dares to fathom the treacherous clay, nor make himself a fellow of the slimy reptiles which reign absolute in this terrible solitude. Here the soldiers prepared to seek for the President's assassin, and no search of the kind has ever been so thorough and patient. The Shawnee in his stronghold of despair in the heart of the Okeefenokee, would scarcely have changed homes with Wilkes Booth and David Herold, hiding in this inhuman country.

" 'The military forces deputed to pursue the fugitives were seven hundred men of the Eighth Illinois Cavalry, six hundred men of the Twenty-second Colored Troops and one hundred men of the Sixteenth New York. These swept the swamps by detachments, the mass of them dismounted, with cavalry at the belts of clearing, interspersed with detectives at frequent intervals in the rear. They first formed a strong picked cordon entirely around the swamps, and then, drawn up in two orders of battle, advanced boldly into the bog by two lines of march. One party swept the swamps longitudinally, the other pushed straight across their smallest diameter.

" 'A similar march has not been made during the war; the soldiers were only a few paces apart, and in steady order they took the ground as it came, now plunging to their arm pits in foul sluices of gangrened water, now hopelessly submerged in slime, now attacked by legions of wood ticks, now tempting some unfaithful log or greenishly solid morass, and plunging to the tip of the skull in poisonous stagnation; the tree boughs rent their uniforms; they came out upon dry land, many of them without a rag of garment, scratched and gashed and spent, repugnant to themselves and disgusting to those who saw them; but not one trace of Booth or Herold was anywhere found. Wherever they might be, the swamps did not contain them.

" 'It was the squad under control of Lieut.-Col. E. J.

Conger and Lieutenant Baker, a cousin of General Baker, that got the first news of Booth. This squad had been dispatched on the steamer John S. Ide, to Belle Plain on the lower Potomac with orders to scour that country faithfully and not to return until the assassin was captured. At Fairfax Court House they met a Confederate officer who told them, under arrest and rough treatment, that Booth had gone to the home of a man named Garrett. Herold had gone away but was expected back before night. It was supposed the two would leave Garrett's sometime in the night or early morning.

" 'Taking this unwilling officer along for a guide, the worn out horsemen retraced their steps, though some were so haggard and wasted with travel they had to be kicked into intelligence before they could climb to their saddles. The objects of the chase thus at hand, the detectives, full of sanguine purpose, hurried the cortege so well along the way by two o'clock early morning all halted at Garrett's farm. In the pale moonlight three hundred yards from the main road to the left, a plain, old farm house looked grayly through the environing locusts. It was worn and whitewashed and two storied and its half-human windows glowered down upon the silent cavalrymen like watching owls, which stood as sentries over some horrible secret asleep within.

" 'Dimly seen behind, an old barn, high and weather beaten, faced the roadside gate; for the house itself lay to the left of its own lane; and nestling beneath the barn, a few corn cribs lay, with a cattle shed at hand.

" 'In the dead silence Baker dismounted and forced the outer gate, Conger kept close behind him and the horsemen followed cautiously. They made no noise in the soft clay nor broke the all-foreboding silence anywhere, till the second gate swung open gratingly, yet even then no hoarse nor shrill response came back save distant creaking as of frogs or owls or the whiz of some passing nighthawk. So they surrounded the pleasant old homestead, each horseman, carbine in poise, adjusted under the grove of locusts, so as to inclose the dwelling with a circle of fire. After a pause Baker rode to the kitchen door on the side, and dismounting, rapped and hallooed lustily. An old man in drawers and nightshirt hastily undrew the

bolts and stood on the threshold, peering shiveringly into the darkness.

" 'Baker seized him by the ear at once and held a pistol to his head.

" " "Where are the men who stay with you? If you prevaricate you are a dead man. Light a candle and be quick about it."

" 'The trembling old man obeyed and in a moment the imperfect rays flared upon his whitening hairs and bluishly pallid face. Then the question was repeated backed up by the glimmering pistol. "Where are these men?"

" 'In the interim, Conger had also entered and, while the household and its invaders were thus in weird tableau, a young man appeared, as if he had risen from the ground—a son of the old man. "Those men you seek, gentlemen," he said "are in the barn. They went there to sleep."

" 'With cocked pistols pointing at the young man's head they followed him to the barn . . . The troops dismounted and were stationed at regular intervals around it and, ten yards distant at every point, four special guards placed to command the door and all weapons in preparation while Baker and Conger went direct to the door. It had a padlock on it and the key of this Baker secured at once. In the interval of silence that ensued, the rustling of straw was heard as of persons rising from sleep. At the same moment Baker hailed—"To the persons in this barn I have a proposal to make. We are about to send in to you the son of the man in whose custody you are found. Either surrender to him your arms and give yourselves up or we'll set fire to the place. We mean to take you both or to have a bonfire and shooting match.

" 'No answer of any kind came to this. The lad, John W. Garrett, who was in great fear, was here pushed through the door by a sudden opening of it, and immediately Lieutenant Baker locked the door on the outside. The boy was heard to state his appeal in undertones. Booth replied, "Damn you. Get out of here. You have betrayed me."

" 'During the time the boy was in the barn, and for a short time after he came out, the candle brought from the house was burning close beside the two detectives rendering it easy for anyone within to have shot them dead.

This observed, the light was cautiously removed and everybody took care to keep out of its reflection.

" 'By this time the crisis of the position was at hand; the cavalry exhibited very variable inclinations, some to run away, others to shoot Booth without a summons; but all excited and fitfully silent. The boy was placed at a remote point and the summons repeated by Baker.

" ' "You must surrender inside there! Give up your arms and appear; there's no chance for escape. We give you five minutes to make up your minds."

" ' "Who are you and what do you want with us?" was asked by Booth.

" ' "We want you to deliver up your arms and become our prisoners."

" ' "But who are you?" called the same strong voice.

" ' "That makes no difference; we know who you are and we want you. We have here fifty men, armed with carbines and pistols. You cannot escape."

" 'There was a long pause. Then Booth said, "Captain, this is a hard case, I swear. Perhaps I am being taken by my own friends . . . give us a little time to consider. You have mistaken your man."

" 'A long and eventful pause ensued. What thronging memories it brought to Booth we can only guess. In this little interval he made the resolve to die. But he was cool and steady to the end.

" ' "Well," hailed Baker for the last time. "We have waited long enough. Surrender your arms and come out or we'll fire the barn."

" ' "I am but a cripple—a one legged man. Withdraw your forces one hundred yards from the door and I will come. Give me a chance for my life, Captain. I will never be taken alive!"

" ' "We did not come here to fight but to capture you. I say again, appear or the barn shall be fired."

" 'Then, with a long breath which could be heard outside, Booth cried in sudden calmness, still invisible to him as were his enemies, "Well then my brave boys, prepare a stretcher for me."

" 'There was a discussion between the two men in the barn, after which one of them rattled the door and said, "I want to surrender. I am Herold."

"'As he spoke he was just inside the door, within whispering distance of Baker. The latter told him to put out his hand and be handcuffed, at the same time drawing open the door a little. Herold thrust forth his hands when, Baker, seizing, jerked him into the night and straightway delivered him to a deputation of cavalrymen. The fellow began to talk of his innocence and plead so noisily that Conger threatened to gag him unless he ceased. Then Booth made his last appeal in the same strong, unbroken voice, "Captain, give me a chance, *there's a mistake.* Give me a chance. Draw off your men. I could have killed you six times tonight but I believe you to be an honest man and would not murder you."

"'It was too late for parley. E're Booth ceased speaking Colonel Conger slipped to the rear, drew some loose straws through a crack and lit a match to them. They were dry and blazed up in an instant carrying a sheet of smoke and flame through the parted planks and heaving, in a twinkling, a world of light and heat upon the magazine within. . . Behind the blaze, with his eye to a crack, Conger saw Wilkes Booth standing upright upon a crutch. . . A second he turned glaring at the fire as if to leap upon it and extinguish it. but it had made such headway that this was a fatal impulse and he dismissed it. As calmly as upon the battle field a veteran stands, amidst the hail of ball and shell and plunging iron, Booth turned at a man's stride and pushed for the door, carbine in poise, and the last resolve of death, which we name despair, sat on his high bloodless forehead.

"'At this moment a disobedient sergeant at a knot hole drew upon Booth the fatal bead. There was a shock, a shout, a gathering up of the splendid figure as if to overstrip the stature God gave him, and John Wilkes Booth fell to the floor, lying there in a heap.

"' "He has shot himself," cried Baker unaware of the source of the report and, rushing in, he grasped his arm to guard against any feint or strategy. A moment convinced him that further struggle with prone flesh was useless. Booth did not move, nor breathe nor gasp. The body was taken up. A mattress was brought. He was placed upon it, his head propped up, and a rag dipped in water and brandy put to his lips.

" 'The lips moved. "Tell mother I died for my country. I thought I did for the best."

" 'By this time the grayness of dawn was approaching; moving figures, inquisitively coming near were to be seen distinctly and the cocks began to crow gutturally though the barn by this time was ashes sending toward the zenith a spiral line of dense smoke.

" 'A soldier had been dispatched for a doctor but the route and return was quite six miles and the sinner was sinking fast. When the fussy little doctor finally arrived he was useless. Just at his coming Booth asked to have his hands raised and shown him. They were so paralyzed that he did not know their location. When they were displayed he muttered with a sad lethargy, "Useless— useless!" These were the last words he ever uttered.

" 'As he began to die the sun arose and threw beams into all the treetops. It was at a man's height when the struggle of death twitched and lingered in the fading bravo's face. His jaw drew spasmodically and obliquely downward; his eyeballs rolled toward his feet and began to swell; lividness like a horrible shadow fastened upon him and with a sort of gurgle and sudden check, he stretched his feet and threw his head back and gave up the ghost.

" 'They sewed him up in a saddle blanket. This was his shroud. . . Herold meantime had been tied to a tree and was now released for the march. Booth's only arms were his carbine, knife and two revolvers. They found about him bills of exchange, Canada money, a photograph, diary and compass. Into the bed of a rickety old wagon owned by a negro, the body was put to be moved to the Potomac River. The old negro geared up his wagon by means of a set of fossil harness and when it was backed to Garrett's porch the discolored corpse was put in it. The corpse was tied with ropes around the legs and made fast to the wagon side. Herold's legs were tied to stirrups and he was placed in the centre of four murderous-looking cavalrymen. So moved the cavalcade, or retribution, with death in its midst along the road to Fort Royal while the man this assassin had murdered was moving in state across a mourning continent.

" 'When the wagon started, Booth's wound, now scarcely dripping, began to run anew. The blood fell through the

cracks of the wagon and dripped upon the axle. It stained the planks and soaked the blankets. The progress of the team was slow as it made its way to Port Royal and all the way went Herold close to the carcass shuddering in so grim companionship and in the awakened fears of his own approaching ordeal, beyond which it loomed already—the gossamer fabric of a scaffold. He tried to tell of himself and of the man who, as a corpse, dripped blood in the wagon bed. But nobody listened to him. All interest of crime, courage and retribution centered in the dead flesh at his feet.

" 'At Washington, high and low turned out to look on Booth but only a few were permitted to see the corpse for purposes of recognition, none of the party who captured him being sure of his identity. The body was fairly preserved. The head had been twice shot through and the collar bone broken and one side of the face was distorted and blue—its expression wildly bandit-like as if beaten by avenging winds.

" 'The Secretary of War, without instructions of any kind, committed to Colonel Baker of the Secret Service, the stark corpse of J. Wilkes Booth and the Secret Service never fulfilled its vocation more secretly. "What have you done with body?" Baker was asked. "That is known to only one man living beside myself. It is gone; I will not tell you where; the only man who knows is sworn to silence; never till the great trumpeter comes, shall the grave of Booth be discovered." And this is true. Last night, the 27th of April, a small row boat received the carcass of the murderer sewed up in a sack; two men were in the boat. It was a strange, wild hour on the Potomac. They carried the body off into the darkness and out of that darkness it will never return; in the darkness, like his great crime, may it remain forever; impassable, invisible, nondescript, condemned to that worse than damnation—annihilation.' "

CHAPTER XIII

"I AM NOW DEAD"

THE reading ceased. Never had these mountaineers heard words slip so easily from human tongue. Never had they sat under the spell of so musical and rich a voice.

A momentary silence followed the closing words—an expectant silence. Then tongues began moving and every man spoke according to his impression—every man except the reader. He listened—keenly studying the faces of these excited men of the mountains.

By his speech, the first man had found the description of the swamp search of prime interest and great was his admiration for the soldiers that had waded their way through mud and lizards and slime and snakes up to their chins in their patriotic effort to discover Abe Lincoln's murderer.

Another man's curiosity dwelt on Herold. What did he look like? For what was he in the plot and who were the other plotters?

A third man asked assistance of the others in his effort to visualize Booth. What did he look like? And how was anybody ever to know what he looked like when his head was so nearly shot off and he turned black and blue so soon?

Two men in a discussion agreed that the man who shot Booth through a knot hole was a coward and not only a coward but a traitor to his country in depriving it of the right to have Booth tried and publicly hanged as becomes a murderer.

It was the last man who raised a question as to the identity of the man who was shot, and registered his dis-

approval of the manner in which the body was so swiftly and secretly disposed of.

"Abe Lincoln was the President of the hull people," he said when his speechmaking time had come. "And this here Booth that murdered him, he belonged to all the people too after he done did the murder. How comes two men git his body, carry it out somewhere and do away with it and nobody else got a right to see it? And who knows that shot-up body they sewed up in a blanket was Booth anyway? Might have been some other feller sleepin' all night in the barn. Tom Willsin read last week that this here Booth was an actor-man, a feller who gits out and makes believe he's somebody else—you know the kind I mean. And Tom Willsin read that this here Booth was one of the best known sights about Washington. Well, if he was, why didn't these here two fellers that took the carcass off in the night to bury it in the river—why didn't they put their Booth in his coffin and let folks see they was no trick about it. It's been told in this here paper there's a big enough reward offered to put a fence around this mountain waiting fer the man who brought in the murderer. It's my notion them two fellers, that's so damn secret, is tryin' to get this pot of gold. Don't nobody settin' at this table know that red-handed Booth is dead yet and God only knows how they'll ever find out since the poor carcass them fellers killed in the barn is hid where no human can find it."

This opinion produced marked excitement in the group around Tom Willsin's board table. Jones looked and listened. The discussion waxed warm, even hot. The stalwart mountaineer who had started it held his ground, convincing himself the more he talked that there was "too damned much nigger in a woodpile" about it for him to believe Abe Lincoln's murderer was killed. Why didn't they let the young feller in the barn who surrendered tell about

the other man. Why did they threaten to gag him? And he appealed to Jones for an opinion.

"He's dead—this Booth is," he answered promptly.

The eyes of the doubting mountaineer were on him close as he said, "You don't know it."

"No—to be sure I do not know it. But if Booth went into the barn with this young Herold it's likely to have been Booth they shot. But here's something else that may be of interest to you gentlemen," and from the paper he read, " 'The diary found on Booth recorded some of the adventures of the fugitives. One of these was the killing of his horse in the tangled forest to avoid detection and then sleeping between the animal's legs to get the warmth while it remained in the dead body during the long hours of the horrible night. With the dawn he dragged his own painful limbs along his untrodden path of flight from the apparently slow but certain grasp of avenging justice.' "

"Tom Willsin," the doubting Thomas of the party exclaimed, bringing his hairy fist down on the table with a bang, "Your paper lies like a thief. What did Booth shoot his horse for? It had four legs and he didn't have but one to get away on if your paper's true. Keep your mind on the situation. Here's ten thousand or a million soldiers, black and white racing through the woods and swamps like rats, lookin', listenin'. Wouldn't they hear the shot if it was fired? Wouldn't they find the horse? Or maybe he dug a hole six feet deep to bury the horse in, dug it with the nails of his fingers since he wasn't carrying a spade. Who wrote that, Stranger Jones?"

The question was addressed to the reader.

"I do not know. It is here. The other story came from Baker himself."

"You don't know? Wall I kin tell ye. It was either a damn fool or a damn liar—one of them two owls of the night that sneaked that carcass off like enough."

In spite of doubts, it was the consensus of opinion around the table that Booth was dead and gone to hell where he belonged.

The grave matter having been settled, it was time to go.

"Let's ride," one of the party said rising and, as one man, they bade Tom Willsin and his guest a hasty good night and were off.

Five minutes later the hoof echo of the last home-going horse had been lost in the silence and fifteen minutes later Tom Willsin was stretched out and snoring with as much gusto as the frogs croaked somewhere down in the hollow.

Jones was not sleepy. Tilting the back of a splint chair against the wall just outside the doorway, he sat down.

"Herold," he said under his breath. "They got him. And 'Jimmie'—poor 'Jimmie'—he didn't deserve it. But it lets me go for I am now dead—dead."

He lifted his eyes. The thin crescent of a new moon and a sprinkling of stars made points of light in the velvety dark sky beneath which hill and valley alike were submerged in black.

The night before, guided by the fragrance of the lilacs he had made his way quickly to the corner of the house, had found the blossoms and had drawn their perfume like cherished memories into his very heart.

He had not noticed the fragrance tonight. Rising he went to the bush and extended his fingers which came in contact with the blossoms as before. But their fragrance was not so outpouring and it stirred the music of no Strauss waltz into quickened melody to gladden him. Was it because he was dead?

It was in the shadows just behind the lilac bushes he had seen the ghost the night before. The dark was everywhere as inviting for ghosts on this night. And strange

to say he had a peculiar desire to see once more this apparition whose mission seemed friendly.

With eyes fastened intently on the deepest point of shade he watched saying several times in a low voice, "I am now dead."

But no etheric substance carrying its own pale illumination appeared and the only voice that broke the vast and impressive silence was the mocking call of a far distant frog.

When Robert Jones left the mountain home of Sojer Tom, after a restful and unusually interesting visit, his host's farewell was rather unexpected.

They were standing where the morning sun shone full on the face of the young man who had just thanked the mountaineer for his generous hospitality.

"'Taint nothin'. I'd do fer any honest man as knocked at my door for help. But I don't mind sayin' I like you more than common and I'm hopin' to see you again. I'm not an old man for forty years yet, and you—you're no more than a stripling and I've got your brand so's I'll know you if it's many a year 'fore I set eyes on you again."

"Brand! My brand!"

The surprise of Robert Jones amused Sojer Tom to a degree of hearty laughter.

"Yes—you've got your brand—two of 'em, in your flesh same as we brand cattle what runs loose in these mountains. A brand on a yearlin' is a brand in twenty years—don't never outgrow it. To your credit you aint said nothin' about 'em. No real men brags about brands they get in fair fightin'. But that mark over your right eye and that kink in your right thumb made I take it by the bullets of damn rebels, will stay with you while you live and be thar for them as stands around your dead body to claim you by, if you wander off and get lost from your people. Yeh—I've got your brand. Good by, sonny."

CHAPTER XIV

JOE VICK

FAR famed in its day was the Anthony House at Little Rock, Arkansas.

Here, from New Orleans, Memphis and St. Louis, as well as from the villages of the state, guests were made welcome while residents of the city met in its big hospitable room to tell stories, exchange gossip, discuss politics, or try a hand at a game, for there were always cards for those who wanted them.

There was music also at the Anthony House and pictures, the most noticeable one a handsome painting of General Albert Pike, scholar, poet, soldier and Mason, of whom Arkansas was justly proud.

And then there was the bar—the best in four states—such a place of refreshment as a thirsty man would travel far to reach, a never failing source of conviviality.

On a day in June, with other guests, there came to the famous Anthony House a man whose manner and clothing seemed mismatched—for the former was one of easy elegance while the latter was stiff and cheap. A close observer would have noticed also that the shape and texture of the man's hands were out of keeping with his cheap attire. He walked with a slight limp—hardly enough to make the support of a cane necessary though he carried one, and he spoke with a voice of most pleasing quality.

This man registered as Joe Vick of Mobile and paid a week's board in advance and, of all the guests who ever visited this hostelry, none enjoyed it more than Joe Vick who, though nobody was to know it, had come a long way over the mountains and hills and vales, but not from the direction of Alabama.

The lights, the odor from the bar and the tinkle of its glass, the atmosphere of a social group, mixed and moving, were a happy welcome after a long journey, and the wide-armed, splint-bottomed chairs invited him to tarry and enjoy himself.

Into one of these ample chairs, after a drink of brandy, Joe Vick seated himself and lit a cigar and, as the fragrance of its smoke rose softly about him, he leaned back in solid comfort.

For a time he watched men come to the bar, heard their bits of conversation and laughter. Then his eyes, after a cursory glance about the room, rested on the painting of Pike and he was yet studying the fine face when a man, in the next chair to his, said, "Handsome painting isn't it."

"Indeed it is. I am admiring it."

"Happen to know Pike?"

"Never saw him but if this is a good picture of him, I'll know him if I ever happen to meet him."

"It's as much like him as life—only of course it's a picture and he's a man—all sorts of a man."

"What does he do?"

"Everything. He's a newspaper man second to none. He's a lawyer of the best grade, he's a soldier—no private, a general, he writes—writes poetry and when it comes to reading—you should see his library. It's the best in the State of Arkansas, and his home, if you're in town a day run out and see it. If he was in town you'd likely catch him digging in his flowers. He has a soft spot for flowers just as he has for books and pictures. Do you know—once he made a trip to St. Louis to get a book. It was some old volume he needed to study. Another time he went to New Orleans to buy a few pictures. Another time he went to Mobile to see some Shakespeare plays. He's strong on Shakespeare."

"Who played Shakespeare in Mobile?"

"Booth—the fellow who killed President Lincoln—John Wilkes Booth—you've heard of him."

"Yes."

"He was an actor."

"Yes. Did General Pike like his acting?"

"Like it? You should have heard him praise the actor. I think he saw him in Richard III and Hamlet. He couldn't say enough. He made all kind of predictions for the young fellow's future."

"Which will never be."

"No—and what a man with the future that Booth had ever turned assassin for is more than I have been able to figure out. General Pike wouldn't believe a word of it when news first came of the murder. It was only after Booth had been shot in the barn and buried in the Potomac, that Pike admitted he was convinced that Booth had committed the crime. If you're in town over tomorrow with half an hour to spare, walk out and see his home—don't miss it."

The man who had been talking to Joe Vick threw his cigar stub into a spittoon and went away. Joe Vick smoked on—thinking. How well he remembered the nights of the Shakespearean plays in Mobile. The name he had written on the hotel register in Mobile was not "Joe Vick." He saw again the brilliant audiences that greeted him; he heard again their cheers.

And General Pike had been in the audience. He had cheered. Again the eyes of Joe Vick went to the painting and, as they rested on it, he felt a glow of pride that added to his comfort.

The next day he saw the splendid mansion of the Old South which General Pike had built. There were roses in the yard, many roses in full bloom. Indeed around so many homes were roses blooming in gorgeous abundance,

the visitor to Little Rock knew why it was called "City of Roses."

Again that night there were roses and a pleasant evening for Joe Vick.

The big dining room of the Anthony House had been cleared for a dance. The air was fragrant with June roses, set about the room in vases and large pitchers. And there were women lovely in lace and embroidery dresses with ribbon sashes and silver buckled slippers on dainty feet.

It was not such a dance as Joe Vick had many times attended at the National Hotel in Washington. There was no brilliant array of guests, no Strauss waltz. It was a select group to dance the stately quadrille and the music was by fiddlers. But the gleam of bare necks and arms and the dimples that came with smiles and the sparkle of bright eyes were as surely feminine attractions in Arkansas as in the Nation's Capital.

Joe Vick was not of the party. But it is doubtful if he could have enjoyed it as much had he been.

First there was the music. With its opening strains he felt himself smiling. He was once again in New Orleans where he had played to a delighted audience. After the show he had attended a small party. He remembered himself as his mirror told him he looked after his make-up had been exchanged for the dress of a successful actor.

His black broadcloth cape, with loose hanging sleeves and lapels faced with heavy satin; his immaculate tailored suit, his kid gloves, his cane—he had had a photograph made in this outfit of clothing—and this he wore to the party, where he was the lion.

It was music heard at this party he now recalled. A man named Faulkner had composed what he called "The Arkansas Traveler" which he played on his violin. Well did Joe Vick remember the response of tapping feet, of

patting hands and finally of limber legs dancing to the stirring tune. Now again he heard the familiar tune. Again he felt its call to set his body in quick motion. But now he sat still an on-looker, unknown.

The several evenings Joe Vick spent in the Anthony House were all pleasant but the one that gave him the most satisfaction was that in which he was a keen listener to a couple of men whose conversation turned on the subject of the martyred Lincoln and his assassin.

Both of these men, as the listener learned, had been slave holders and had fought in the Confederate army. Their conversation was, therefore, of much interest because of the different attitudes the two men took to the dead Lincoln and his dead assassin.

They had been speaking of their fear of reconstruction days when one man said, "If Lincoln had lived all these things that seem to be combining for our further humiliation and discomfort would not have happened."

"Where did you get that notion?"

"From a study of the man and an acquaintance with his purposes and methods."

"God! His purposes and methods! The subjugation of the South his purpose, and four years of Civil War his method!"

"Just because he won in his fight to preserve the Union and we lost is no reason he was wrong and we right. We believed we were right in fighting for 'states' rights'. We were honest weren't we? Give him credit with being equally honest in saving the Union from division, perhaps disruption. One of his first declarations to his cabinet after Lee's surrender was that the states which seceded should be allowed to come back without humility or penance —come back as the sister states they were before they drew out. Could anything be fairer or more generous? I tell you if Lincoln had lived, reconstruction days would hold

no terrors for the South, and the man whose mad act took him away has done the South irreparable injury and history will so determine."

"Words—words—how far off the track of reason a man can get is shown by what you say. The man who put Lincoln out of the way did humanity a service and future generations will so consider his act. It was not the act of a mad man. Neither was it the act of the cat's paw of a conspiracy. It was the act of a brave man—a man in whose veins never a drop of coward blood ran—a man who dared all for the sake of the South he loved!"

"I do not deny that John Wilkes Booth loved the South nor that the South loved him. But do you excuse murder—murder from the back? In my opinion destructive methods breed more destruction. Only constructive effort counts in the final round up."

"Lincoln's four years of Civil War were constructive, weren't they?"

"He fought to preserve not to break up. War is hardly a fair method, however, to judge a man. Because you fought to break the Union you would not consider yourself a destructionist. Why then should you pass judgment on any other man. We thought we were right. They thought they were . . . The way to determine a man's intents and purposes is to study them in time of peace. When Abraham Lincoln became President I studied into his past history. Among other constructive measures which I found him always standing for was education."

"For his own people—his own section. Did you ever hear of him recommending an educational measure for a Southern state?"

"Yes. For Arkansas. And not only had he recommended but he had put forces in operation for the foundation of an Arkansas University. You know this. If his plans are carried out, in years to come, years that have

forgotten you and me, this university will be a blessing to our Southland. Thousands may enter a door of opportunity never knowing that the heart and hand of Abraham Lincoln first opened it. Let us give the devil his just dues.''

''So say I. And, because I believe every man should have his just desserts, I insist that John Wilkes Booth played a hero part—a martyr part if you will, in his loyalty to the South. Just now, when his act is fresh in the minds of the people and the so-called conspiracy trial in Washington is being worked to the limit, loud condemnation is heard. Some even who are glad of his act put a curse on him. It is the proper, the safe thing to do. But wait a few years. Wait until hypocritical sentiment has run its course. Wait until the South gets its bearing—rises from the dust. Then will the name of John Wilkes Booth be written with her immortals and a statue to him will be erected in the market place.''

A third man joined the two and the conversation turned to an article in the Gazette—for the third man was William E. Woodruff, pioneer editor and important opinion-former,

Again Joe Vick was a pleased listener, but his pleasure was not now in the subject discussed but in what had already been said. As he thought it over, the opinion expressed by the man who believed the name of John Wilkes Booth would some day become immortal, took definite hold of his own mind. The more he thought of it the more natural it seemed that the South should and would some day hold a tyrant's slayer in sacred memory and he went to sleep that night comfortable in an accepted assurance.

CHAPTER XV

"TELEGRAPH OFFICE"

On a high bank of the smoothly flowing Arkansas River at Little Rock the Capitol stood, its stately Doric columns shining through the green of native forest trees like some temple of the gods. Back of this impressive building the river bank shelved to the water and on these shelves were rocks with grass in the crevasses and on the rocks half-wild goats capered and jumped.

The day following the night when by a partisan Booth was declared immortal, Joe Vick took a path that led back of the State House and in the shade of a wide-branched elm sat down to enjoy the scene made by shining water, verdant green, a June-blue sky, the capers of goats and the progress of a flat boat ferrying a train to Little Rock from the north shore of the river.

He was yet enjoying the comfortable feeling that had come to him with his belief that John Wilkes Booth had done a heroic act which the world would some day acclaim as such, and was making vague plans for his future when he saw an Indian coming toward him.

During the days he had spent in Little Rock, Joe Vick, though he knew a number of notables of the place by sight and had enjoyed overhearing their conversation, had not formed any acquaintances. Since the night before however, he had felt a freedom and desire to talk and the sight of the Indian was especially welcome since a part of his indefinite plan for his future was to travel west and hunt on the prairies.

The Indian proved to be a Cherokee who spoke English quite well. He had been in Little Rock on business con-

cerning his tribe. He was returning to the Indian Territory that afternoon. There was good hunting in the Territory. There were yet a few buffaloes farther to the west. He would be glad to take the white man with him to his lodge and on the hunt. Horses were cheap.

All this Joe Vick learned in a very few minutes. His plans were rapidly perfected. Two hours later the silent man who had sat around the Anthony House had disappeared. The cheap suit he had worn was presented to Big Eagle, the Cherokee chief, to his great joy, by a man in typical hunter's outfit. Big Eagle, was also paid the price of the best horse that could be obtained for the white man who gave his name as Thomas Henry, his place of residence Atlanta, Georgia, and the reason for his Western trip a desire to regain strength lost during a long spell of sickness.

Together the red man and the white man waited for the ferry. Together they boarded the train and together they landed in Fort Smith each man being more pleased with the other as the acquaintance proceeded.

It was at Fort Smith that Thomas Henry read some news for which he had been looking. While he had been quietly and comfortably resting at the Anthony House, a world-famous criminal trial was in progress in Washington before a military commission. The several men and one woman, branded as conspirators in President Lincoln's assassination, who sat before the court heavily manacled and guarded, were his acquaintances. Some of them called him friend.

There was the boyish Herold almost childlike in his eagerness to assist in the original kidnapping plot and childlike in the pleasure with which he expected to spend the money, safely waiting in a Canadian bank, which should be his share when the President of the United States was a prisoner of war in Richmond. His eager interest died at first

mention of the greater crime than kidnapping and only his unreasonable admiration and loyalty for Booth made him a participant. Thomas Henry knew this. And there was Dr. Mudd, who had housed him, relieved his pain and assisted him in escaping. There was the giant Payne and half a dozen others. John Surratt was not a prisoner before the bar of justice however. By another gate than the one Booth escaped through he had flown to safe cover. Nor was Weichmann with the shackled accused. He had turned state's evidence and seemed to be straining the point to produce evidence that would convict Mrs. Surratt. And Mrs. Surratt? Her motherly voice, her kindly blue eye, her willing hands—her devotion to her children and her friends—could there exist a body of men, however bitter their hatred or biased their opinion, who would hang this woman? No—Thomas Henry was certain in this case. Never had a woman been hanged in Washington. The Court would see to it that the Nation's Capital was not stained with the crime of hanging a woman on evidence sworn to by a coward trying to save his own neck.

It was news from the trial that Thomas Henry's eager eye looked for when he came in possession of a newspaper containing the report.

He read:—

"The Military Commission met this morning in secret session with closed doors and after being in session some hours found a verdict in the case of the conspirators, when a record was made up and forwarded to the War Department for review, from whom it will be sent to the President who will examine the whole of the voluminous testimony closely before rendering his decision on the findings of the Military Commission. The date line over this item was June 29th. Under a July 6th date line an order from the Adjutant-General's office at the War Department was issued ordering the execution of sentences as follows. David E. Herold to be hanged by the neck until he be dead at such time and place as the President of the United States shall direct, two-

thirds of the Commission concurring therein. Atzerodt's sentence was the same—he is to be hanged by the neck until he be dead. Payne's sentence also contained the fated words—hanged by the neck until he be dead. Mrs. Surratt's name came next—'The Commission does therefore sentence her, the said Mary E. Surratt to be hanged by the neck until she be dead at such time and place—' ''

The paper dropped from the hands of Thomas Henry. With nervous fingers he picked it up casting a hurried glance about to see if his trembling had been noticed. He clutched the paper; his heart beating out of time. Mrs. Surratt to be hanged? No. He would read on. There was something that would stay this sentence.

The next black-faced heading told in cold-blooded type that Andrew Johnson had approved the sentences and ordered them to be carried into execution.

Again there was the catch in the man's heart and the shaking of fingers. But there was more type. Surely, somewhere before the end there would be mitigating words.

Spangler's sentence came next—poor old Spangler whose only crime had been to hold Booth's horse on the night of the young actor's last and mad act. For this he was sentenced to six years' hard labor.

Then came Arnold with hard labor for life, and then Dr. Mudd sentenced to hard labor for life, the Dry Tortugas his fated destination.

Thomas Henry paused in his reading. His face was white. But it was a momentary pause only. He must hurry on to find something more about Mrs. Surratt.

"About noon today," he read, "General Hancock who is charged with the execution of the sentences proceeded to the Penitentiary and in company with Major-General Hartranft visited the cell of each prisoner and informed each what verdict had been rendered. No one was present at this interview but the two generals and the turnkey.

"Mrs. Surratt on learning her fate was extremely depressed and wept bitterly. She was alone, her daughter

having left her a short time before not knowing the sentence was to be announced to her mother today.

"Payne seemed to regard it as a foregone conclusion and manifested little or no emotion. He has evidently nerved himself to meet his death with firm resolution.

"Atzerodt was violently agitated and almost paralyzed with fear. He evidently hoped for a different result.

"Herold listened to the reading of the order in his case with boyish indifference but soon after became impressed with the solemnity of his situation and appeared more serious, asking that his sisters might be allowed to visit him.

"Payne asks for a Baptist clergyman, Dr. Stracker of Baltimore, who was sent for and arrived this evening.

"Mrs. Surratt's spiritual advisers, Fathers Walter and Wiget, Catholic priests, were asked for. Her wishes were immediately complied with. Both clergymen arrived this evening and were admitted to her cell.

"Five of Herold's sisters visited him this afternoon at the prison and the scene was truly distressing. After they left him they wept bitterly in the entrance room down stairs. Two are grown ladies and the others young misses. But they all seemed to realize the dreadful situation of their brother. One of them brought a small basket of cakes and little delicacies for the prisoner which was left in charge of General Hartranft to be examined before being given to him.

"The scaffold is being built this afternoon in the south yard of the prison, and it will be large enough to execute all at one time. The coffins and burial clothes are being prepared this afternoon and evening at the arsenal.

"An impression appears to prevail throughout the city that Mrs. Surratt will not be executed, that the President will commute her sentence to imprisonment."

A sigh of relief escaped the lips of Thomas Henry as he read the last paragraph. He read it again—"an impression appears to prevail." Nothing very hopeful, yet he hoped.

As he walked down the street, his mind as far away as Washington, his eyes caught sight of a sign which seemed to be shaking itself in his very face. The words on the

sign were "Telegraph Office," and some uncanny notion crept into him to send a wire to Washington—just a few words which would remove the life of Mary Surratt from the jeopardy it was in.

A swift flush of anger was the reaction to this uninvited suggestion. The presence of John Surratt at his mother's trial and one word from him would have cleared her of the awful charge of conspiracy to murder. Yet, he had fled. He was safe while the mother, who would have given her life to save his, was caught in the mesh of his weaving. And Weichmann, the man to whom Mrs. Surratt had been a mother—Weichmann, a trusted inmate of the Surratt home, he too could have prevented the sentence against Mrs. Surratt. He, too, was safe under the protecting wing of the death-dealing power, having betrayed her to save himself.

So, too, Thomas Henry was safe. He was no blood son or sworn friend of Mary Surratt. Why should he sacrifice himself to save her life when her own son and her son's friend deserted her. The suggestion was an effrontery. Besides she would not hang. He was certain of it.

But the sign he hurriedly passed, by an inscrutable turn of psychological magic, hung itself in his mind and he carried it with him to the wagon yard, where he was to meet Big Eagle, and with him that evening cross the border into the Territory.

CHAPTER XVI

ON FOUR SCAFFOLDS

Across the line in the Territory, Big Eagle and Thomas Henry were joined by a tall and arrow-straight young Indian called John White Fox, and that night around the camp fire young Henry heard a story which in no degree lessened the protesting uneasiness occasioned in his mind by the words "Telegraph Office."

John White Fox had been implicated in a murder. He was tried before a court of his tribal chiefs and would have been acquitted had he not at a later stage made a confession of the crime. This confession was made to save the life of another young chieftain around whom circumstantial evidence was weaving a fatal web. The other young Indian was cleared. John White Fox was convicted and sentenced to be shot at an appointed place thirty days later. Twenty-three of the thirty days had gone. Another seven days and he would not again be seen in the chase or around the camp fire of the living red man.

He referred to the matter without feeling. A blanket would be spread on the ground. Picked shooters would be waiting. When he arrived his heart would be sounded by a trained ear against his breast. A spot of white paper about as large as a silver dollar would be pinned carefully over the beating heart. On his knees the condemned man would face the rifle. All would be still. One moment he would be conscious of the sky—the earth—the sunshine. The next moment he would know nothing, perhaps not even how it had happened.

Thomas Henry watched the face of the red man, in

the glow of the flickering camp fire, a handsome face lit on the cheeks with spots of flame. How calm that face was—how unconcerned.

"Are you going back to be shot?" he asked.

Both John White Fox and Big Eagle turned their eyes questioningly to Thomas Henry.

"It is not natural for man to deliver himself up to be shot," he said by way of a silently called for explanation of his question.

"A Cherokeee's word has been given and a Cherokee lies *never.*"

"But you could go away—far—far away and be detained."

"The Red Man can never get away from the Great Spirit. Can the White Man?"

It was Big Eagle who asked the question. Thomas Henry made no answer and Big Eagle spoke again.

"When a Red Man robs a Red Man of his life, by a life, he must pay. It is the law. Is it not so with the White Man?"

"White Men have been known to escape the penalty of such a crime."

"White Men only think they escape. The Red Man knows better. The Red Man knows he can never run away from himself. Where he goes fear goes with him so that in the rustle of dry grass, the falling of a leaf, the moving of a shadow, the stillness of the night, he hears that following him which will take the life from him he would cheat justice of."

"You do not mean that the life of every man who takes the life of another man must settle the score?"

"It is the law. Sometimes the murderer's life is taken by another than himself. Sometimes his own hand is lifted against himself. Sometimes slow death creeps on him

making every breath one of fear until at last it catches him in its net to die like a coward instead of a man."

"Death—John White Fox does not seem to mind it."

"He is ready. He has gathered his corn and sold his horses. An honorable Cherokee he will go from his hunting grounds here to the Happy Hunting Grounds in which no coward or dog of a liar or cheater can hunt. What is there to be afraid of when a man is ready?"

"When a man is ready," Thomas Henry repeated but he asked no more questions.

The fire burned low and out, for the night was not cold. A long time the three men smoked in silence each occupied with his own thoughts. The thoughts of Henry were with the Surratts in Washington, Mrs. Surratt and Anna, her sweet young daughter. He remembered the night he had kissed the girl. How she had laughed and blushed and her mother had given him a glass of excellent home-made wine before he went to the secret meeting where John Surratt and Weichmann awaited him.

With thoughts of Mrs. Surratt came again the words "Telegraph Office" and as often as they came he assured himself that there was no danger of Mrs. Surratt's dying on the gallows.

He waited anxiously, however, for the newspaper which would bring news of the ordered executions at Washington.

He was alone when he read, under a special from Washington dated July 9th, 1865, the story which ran in part as follows:—[1]

"Today the last scene of the terrible tragedy of the 14th of April took place. Lewis Payne, George A. Atzerodt, David E. Herold and Mary E. Surratt, the ringleaders in the murderous plot to assassinate the heads of government and throw the land into anarchy and confusion, paid the penalty of their crime upon the gallows . . .

[1] This account is taken from the *Philadelphia Daily Inquirer*, published at the time and is presented unedited.

"The sun shone with its intensest rays and had it not been for a breeze at intervals, the thermometer would have stood at 100.

"At as early an hour as eight A.M., people commenced to wend their way down to the prison, and the boats to Alexandria, which ran close by the jail, were crowded all day by those who took the trip in hopes of catching a glimpse of the gallows or of the execution, but it was all in vain. The only position outside the jail that could be used as an observatory was the large building upon the left side of the Arsenal, which had about fifty spectators upon it who had a good view of the whole.

"Between nine and ten in the morning the three anterooms of the prison on the first floor were thronged with army officers, principally of Hancock's corps anxious to get a view of the execution from the windows, from which the scaffold could be plainly seen.

"Newspaper reporters soon began to congregate there also and in a few minutes not less than a score were in attendance waiting to pick up the smallest item of interest. No newspaper man was allowed to see the prisoners in their cells before they were led out to execution and General Hartranft was very decided on this point.

"While waiting here for over two hours the clergymen passed in and out through the riveted door which creaked heavily on its hinges as it swung to and fro, and the massive key was turned upon the inner side with a heavy sound as a visitor was admitted within its portals.

"Mrs. Surratt's daughter came accompanied by a lady. Her eyes were swollen—red with much weeping and as she approached the heavy door she broke into sobs crying 'Mother! Mother! Somebody help me save my mother!' The eyes of the guards were wet as she passed into the corridor where her mother is incarcerated.

"Atzerodt passed the night previous to the execution in his cell praying and crying. On the morning of the execution he spent most of the time on the floor of his cell in his shirt sleeves. He was attended by a lady dressed in deep black who carried a prayer book and seemed more exercised in spirit than the prisoner himself. Who the lady was could not be ascertained. She left him at half past twelve and exhibited great emotion at parting . . .

"Eleven o'clock and the crowd grows. Reporters are scribbling industriously. A surpressed whisper is audible all over the room and the hall, as the hour draws nearer and the preparations begin to be more demonstrative. The rumbling sound of the trap as it falls in the course of the experiments which are being made to test it and to prevent any unfortunate accident occurring at the critical moment, is heard through the windows and all eyes are involuntarily turned in that direction for curiosity is excited to the highest pitch to view the operation of the fatal machinery. There are two or three pictorial papers represented. One calmly makes a drawing of the scaffold for the next issue of his paper and thus the hours till noon, pass away.

"At twelve o'clock the bustle increases. Officers are running to and fro calling for orderlies and giving orders. General Hartranft is trying to answer twenty questions at once from as many different persons. The sentry in the hall is becoming angry because the crowd will keep intruding on his beat when suddenly a buggy at the door announces the arrival of General Hancock. After greeting General Hartranft he says, 'Get ready, General. I want to have everything put in readiness as soon as possible.' This was the signal for the interviews of the clergymen, relatives and friends of the prisoners to cease and for the doomed to prepare for execution . . .

"The drops are tried with three-hundred-pound weights upon them to see if they will work. One falls all right; one hangs part way down and the hatchet and saw were brought into play. The next time they were all right. The rattle echoes around the wall, it reaches the prisoners' cells close by and penetrates their inmost recesses . . .

"The scaffold which was erected at the northeast corner of the penitentiary yard, and consisted of a simple wooden structure of very primitive appearance, faced about due west. The platform was elevated about twelve feet from the ground and was about twenty feet square. Attached to the main platform were the drops, two in number, on which the criminals were to stand . . . The executioners were fine and stalwart specimens of Union soldiers . . . The rope was furnished from the Navy Yard and was one and one-half inches in circumference and composed of twenty strands.

"The graves, four in number, were dug close to the scaffold and next to the prison wall. They were about three feet and a half deep, in a dry, clayey dirt and about seven feet long. Four pine boxes similar to those used for packing guns in, stood between the graves and the scaffold. These were for coffins, both being in full view of the prisoners as they emerged from their cells, and before them until they commenced the dreadful ascent of those thirteen steps. About a thousand soldiers were in the yard and upon the high wall around it, which is wide enough for sentries to patrol. The sun's rays made it, very oppressive and the walls kept off the little breeze that was stirring. There was no shade and men huddled together along the walls and around the pump to discuss with one another the prospect for a reprieve or delay for Mrs. Surratt . . . When one of them came out and saw the four ropes hanging from the beam he exclaimed 'My God, they are not going to hang all four, are they?'

"At twelve-forty four arm chairs are brought out and placed upon the scaffold and the moving around of General Hartranft indicates the drawing near of the time. Newspaper reporters are admitted to a position about thirty feet from the gallows. About one o'clock and ten minutes the heavy door in front of the cells is swung upon its hinges for the hundredth time within an hour and a few reporters, with General Hancock, pass in and through the the yard and the big door closes with a slam behind them. All take positions to get a good view. General Hancock for a last time takes a survey of the preparations and being satisfied that everything is ready, he re-enters the prison building and in a few moments the solemn procession emerges, marching down the back steps into the yard in the following order:—

"The condemned Mrs. Surratt leading Herold, Payne and Atzerodt, is supported by Lieutenant-Colonel McCall, Two Hundredth Pennsylvania Regiment, on her right side and Sergeant W. R. Kenny, Company A, Twelfth Veteran Reserve Corps, on her left with Fathers Walker and Weigel, her spiritual advisors walking together . . . Mrs. Surratt ascended the scaffold and was led to an arm chair in which she was seated. An umbrella was held over her by the two holy fathers to protect her from the sun whose

rays shot down like blasts from a fiery furnace. She was attired in a black bombazine dress and black bonnet with black veil which she wore over her face till she was seated on the chair. During the reading of the order for the execution by General Hartranft, the priest held a small crucifix before her which she kissed fervently several times. She first looked around on the scene before her then closed her eyes and seemed engaged in silent prayer. The reading and the announcement of the clergyman in behalf of other prisoners having been made, Colonel McCall, assisted by the other officers proceeded to remove her bonnet, pinion her elbows and tie strips of cotton stuff around the dress below her knees. This done, the rope was placed around her neck and her face covered with a white cap reaching down to the shoulders. When they were pinioning her arms she turned her head and made some remarks to the officers in a low tone which could not be heard. It appeared they had tied her elbows too tight for they slackened the bandage slightly and then awaited the final order.

"All the prisoners were prepared at the same time and the preparations of each was completed at about the same moment so that when Mrs. Surratt was thus pinioned she stood scarcely ten seconds supported by those standing near her, when General Hartranft gave the signal by clapping his hands twice for both drops to fall and as soon as the second and last signal was given both fell and Mrs. Surratt with a jerk, fell to the full length of the rope. It was done quick as lightning. She was leaning over when the drop fell and this gave a swinging motion to her body which lasted several minutes before it assumed a perpendicular position. Her death was instantaneous; she died without a struggle. The only muscular movement discernable was a slight contraction of the left arm which she seemed trying to disengage from behind her as the drop fell.

"After being suspended thirty minutes she was cut down and placed in a square wooden box or coffin, in the clothes in which she died and was interred in the prison yard. The rope made a clean cut around her neck fully an inch in diameter which was black and discolored with bruised blood. The cap was not taken off her face and she was laid in the coffin with it on and thus passed away

from the face of the earth Mary E. Surratt. Her body it is understood will be given to her family for burial."

The face of Thomas Henry as he read of the execution of Mrs. Surratt was as white and his eyes as terror-haunted as if he too stood on the fatal trap waiting for its drop.

"She is dead," he said in a hoarse whisper, "dead—DEAD!"

For a few moments he sat motionless as if paralyzed. Then he mechanically turned his eyes again to the printed sheet. The bearing of Payne on the scaffold was described and the last moments of Herold told in harrowing details, dwelling on the heartrending scene of the condemned man's sisters. How the prisoners spent their last night was recounted and a description of the execution ground was given.

But this was of small interest to Thomas Henry. His eye ran on until it again caught the word "Surratt" and under the title "Incidents at the White House" he read:—

"About half past eight o'clock this morning, Miss Surratt accompanied by a female friend, again visited the White House having been there last evening for the purpose of obtaining an interview with the President. President Johnson having given orders that he would receive no one today, the door-keeper stopped Miss Surratt at the foot of the steps leading up to the President's office and would not permit her to proceed farther. She then asked permission to see General Mussey, the President's Military Secretary, who promptly answered the summons and came down stairs where Miss Surratt was standing.

"As soon as the General made his appearance Miss Surratt threw herself upon her knees before him catching him by the coat. With loud sobs and streaming eyes she implored him to assist her in obtaining a hearing with the President.

"General Mussey, in as tender a manner as possible, informed Miss Surratt that he could not comply with her request as President Johnson's orders were imperative and he would receive no one.

"Upon General Mussey's returning to his office Miss Surratt threw herself upon the stair steps where she remained a considerable length of time sobbing aloud in the greatest anguish, protesting her mother's innocence and imploring every one who came near her to intercede in her mother's behalf. While thus weeping she declared her mother was too good and kind to be guilty of the enormous crime of which she was convicted and asserting that if her mother was put to death she wished to die also.

"The scene was heartrending and many of those who witnessed it including a number of hardy soldiers, were moved to tears."

Again Thomas Henry paused in his reading.

Across his vision there flashed the picture of a girlish body prone upon the White House steps. He could hear the sobs that shook her slender shoulders and see the tears as they dropped upon the floor in spots of sickly silver to change as their surface enlarged, to damp grey blots.

Anna Surratt! For a moment there came to the man a glimpse of a glad face, childlike in its radiance of life and love as she danced with the actor. Then again the sobs and tears and heartrending pleadings for a mother's life.

A flush, deep and hot came to the face that had been pallid and where fear had shown in the eyes the flame of anger burned as through clenched teeth Thomas Henry muttered, "Andy Johnson—drunken brute! Among civilized men when did ever so pitiful an appeal fall on so hardened a heart. Damn his traitor soul—his lying, murder-loving soul!"

Yet even in the heat of his wrath he saw the words "Telegraph Office." The effect was somewhat cooling.

He dropped the paper as if it were some putrid thing.

CHAPTER XVII

THE EMPTY NOOSE

THROUGH the trees he could see the smoke rising from the fire of Big Eagle—a low fire on a summer night, but enough to cook a day's rations for, in the morning, the three were starting to the West. Thomas Henry's new horse was in the corral—and a fine horse for both endurance and speed it was said to be. Two days' journeying John White Fox would be with them. Then the young Indian, with a peaceful stoicism incomprehensible to Thomas Henry, would stop at the place where he was to meet death, while he, the white man with the other red men who were to join Big Eagle, would penetrate the farther West, perhaps to meet the swift death the Indian said was a man-slayer's certain justice.

Thomas Henry did not partake of the supper Big Eagle had prepared. Big Eagle asked no questions but he had thoughts. He had seen his white companion go into the woods with the newspaper. Something he had read in it had affected him badly, had taken his appetite, had made his face ashy like that of a dead white man. White men were peculiar. Most of them could not be trusted. He would watch this one even though he seemed so honest and generous a White Man.

With the loss of his appetite Thomas Henry also found himself unable to rest his troubled mind in sleep. On his bed close to the earth he watched the moon rise slowly above the uneven tree tops. John White Fox who lay next to him was sleeping soundly and Big Eagle who lay stretched just beyond seemed asleep.

But never had the mind of the White Man been more

active. He thought of the free and comfortable state of mind he had experienced after he had heard declared so effectively that the name of Booth would yet come to be honored and immortal.

How pleasant the memory of the days spent at the Anthony House. And yet how far away as if they were part of some remote past.

Now the assurance that had been comfortable had given place to the acute pain of a tormenting accusation which he charged to those two infernal words "Telegraph Office." If he had not seen them, the ignominious death of Mary E. Surratt, though shocking, might not have been accusing.

Again his mind turned to President Johnson, Chief Executive because of the death of a man elected by the people; then to President Lincoln and with the thought of Abraham Lincoln came a question.

Would Lincoln have turned ears of flint to the pleading of a broken-hearted daughter lying at his door step and praying mercy for a condemned mother?

Quickly as mind flashes the question brought its own answer. No—never would Abe Lincoln have acted so dastardly a coward. He might make war and humiliate the Southland but no woman would have died like a dog at his hands with the black mark of a twenty strand rope around her neck. The mere suggestion of the name of Abraham Lincoln made the thought impossible. From the impression which was an effect, the man's mind instinctively turned to its cause to assure himself.

Voluntarily, eagerly, he went back as the mental man goes, to stand in the presence of Abraham Lincoln, this time not to mock or curse, but to hear with his ears and take into his heart words of assurance.

Twice these words had come to him with piercing power from the ghost of the man that in life he had heard utter them.

How his eyes had seemed loosed from their fastenings as in horror he beheld that which he had slain, arisen on Easter morning! How cold his blood had coursed! How fiery heavy the feeling of the pistol in his empty hand!

The spirit might have appeared with the message that for his dastardly act it would torment him to his dying day—perhaps forever after.

It did not. Its message was, "Charity for all."

The second time that he had seen the vital ghost was on the lonely mountain top with a sickle-thin moon and handful of stars over his head and the velvet black shadows of valleys beneath him. Where the fragrance of lilacs had hung heaviest the apparition had gathered itself into form and from the tremendous solitude the familiar words had been spoken as if out of the infinite and into the forever—"With malice toward none; with charity for all."

Yet a third time would he hear. For this he waited.

"The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether," the tall man of sorrow-haunted face was saying, "With malice toward none; with charity for all."

"Charity for all." Would this have included Mrs. Surratt even had Abraham Lincoln known she was implicated in his murder? This was the question uppermost in the man's troubled mind.

Surging, welling up through his innermost being, as if for the moment this being were an avenue of expression for some dynamic cosmic energy the force of which almost staggered him, came his answer—an assurance that had Mary E. Surratt actually murdered him the strange, unhuman charity of Abraham Lincoln would have extended even to her.

For a moment the fullness of the message touched so deep into the quick of his soul Thomas Henry was overcome with weakness and a reverential feeling of sinking down or looking up. But it was no longer fear. It was

the spirit of the message taking hold of him. Never again, he felt at this moment, in time or in eternity could he doubt the hearty honesty of the comforting words.

The two times he had been so impressed by the words before, they had come from the spirit through the mysterious Voice. He looked about him. Nearby shadows offered a place of appearance for the ghost which he now had a desire to see again. He tried to imagine the strange chill that he had experienced with the visualization of the apparition before. But no ghost came and when he had grown weary of watching, and disappointed, he dropped asleep to find himself on the pile of tobacco leaves that had been his bed in the haunted thicket. The suggestion of crumpled bits of damp and worn velvet came to him as his tired body sank against the pile. The faint odor of uncured tobacco reached his nostrils.

But no sooner had he adjusted himself for a much needed rest than he felt something moving beneath him, something worming about with a terrible and vital strength —something wiggling and pressing upward through the leaves in which it had been hidden. Whatever this worming, writhing creature might be, it was coming out, and with a terrible awareness, he became suddenly conscious that it was coming after him.

With a terrific leap, as if his legs had on the instant become elongated many yards and supplied with the muscles of an army of frogs, he left the tobacco-leaf bed just in time to see this mysterious and awesome creature sliding out and toward him.

It was an empty noose twenty strands strong. It was hungry with a devouring passion. It had no eyes but it saw him. It was less than a brute and more than a human. And it was after him. With a movement of great rapidity, half slide, half spring, it came in his direction.

With inhuman speed the man left the thicket flying

through woods and over fields until he came to a dark river where the tide turned in. Here he took refuge in a small boat which, with the speed of a wide-winged bird, turned into the Stygian gloom.

But the empty noose was after him. There was the sound of an unnatural motion of the black waters as if they had turned to oil through which something moved quickly with neither a leap nor a jump—but with a desperately swift and insistent glide.

Quivering in its mad desire to throw itself about him in fatal strangulation, the victim of the sentient noose knew that it was swiftly coming upon him.

Again with a mighty and supernatural effort the man fleeing the noose escaped. Leaving his boat on the dark waters he sped on strange, wild wings to a high mountain the side of which reached upward from a dry canyon precipitous as the side of a towering wall.

Here, with the world below, the pursued man breathed easily of the ocean of air with no empty noose near to threaten strangulation.

But even as his breath came easily the ominous sound of dry leaves crackling as when a black snake takes its hurried way across a dry ravine, reached his ear. It was the starving, empty noose on his trail. It had left the canyon and was making its way up the sheer width of the solid rock. It was with neither a slide nor a glide it came but with a forward quiver of incredible swiftness.

With a scream the prey of the empty noose fled down the mountain side just as his pursuer showed itself above the ledge.

Down into the valley he flew and over hills; across vast prairies he sped and over trackless seas and deserts that lay beyond them. In solitude he sought refuge and in crowded cities hiding. But always by day and by night, by land and by sea, the empty noose with an ever-sharpening

hunger and an eager twitching of its twenty strands, was just behind him. And once after it had been in hot pursuit of him for years, it almost caught him. He felt its harsh tightening coil about his neck.

With a scream he made one more desperate attempt at escape. With this effort he opened his eyes to find himself standing upright beside his camp bed trying to tear something from his neck that was choking him.

And in the pale glow of the waning moon he saw the tall figure of Big Eagle who was calmly watching the white man's mad motions.

"My God!" Thomas Henry exclaimed as he wiped the cold sweat from his brow. "I've had an awful dream!"

There was no response from the Red Man.

The White Man thought quickly. What had he said or done in his sleep that had aroused the Indian? He did not know.

"I thought I was well of my old sickness—indeed I did, Big Eagle. I have strange fits in my sleep. By this I know my malady is returning. In Kansas City I have a brother, a physician, in a hospital. I will go to him and I cannot get away too soon."

"None too soon," was Big Eagle's mechanical reply. "Your horse is waiting."

No words of farewell were spoken save a word of warning from the Red Man.

"Beware the tongue. It sleeps not."

Glad indeed was Thomas Henry when he was well away from the Cherokee's camp.

CHAPTER XVIII

JESSE SMITH DISAPPEARS

Among mule drivers, and Isaac Treadkel, general overseer of the pack train that took provisions from Omaha to Federal forces stationed in the Salt Lake Valley, had known many, Jesse Smith was unique.

It was the latter part of September, 1865, Jesse Smith was hired to drive a four-mule team overland in October.

On the wagon, Smith, who was a young fellow of unusually prepossessing personality, did well. But he had not long been in the employ of Treadkel before it was discovered that he knew nothing about taking care of a mule team and his hitching was always done by some of the other drivers, he, Smith, meantime saying speeches for the mule men, a division of labor much enjoyed by the men, for Smith could say speeches which made their hair stand on end or tears come to the eyes.

As the nights grew frosty and darkness fell early, members of the pack train sat around evening fires and engaged in story telling, speech making and the discussion of such topics of current interest as reached them.

The company was an assorted one. Several of the men had been in the war, some on one side, some on another. One man, an acquaintance of Treadkel, had formerly been an Eastern contractor and was on his way to the Southwest on business.

Perhaps others did not notice it but it struck Jesse Smith as being strange how often the conversation around the fire turned to Abraham Lincoln. And generally the name of Booth was brought in, the reason for his murderous act to be discussed and his memory to be cursed.

One such occasion came up shortly before the end of

the pack train's journey had been reached from a remark made by Treadkel about a newspaper account of the investigation by the War Department of a traitorous organization known by many names among them "Sons of Liberty," "Order of American Knights" and, "Knights of the Golden Circle."

The report of the Judge Advocate General showed this organization of many and changing names to be oath-bound, and with military wings. For the masses of its members numbering hundreds of thousands, there were three degrees. For those of the more rabid desire, of more daring activity and worthy of deeper secrecy, there was the Fourth Degree.

This great secret traitorous body was not bounded by the Mason and Dixon line. It was north as well as south and everywhere its purpose was to disrupt the Union. Its plans were the securing of arms, moneys, boats, railroads, strategic points of every kind, while another branch of its organization planted disaffection among troops. The dastardly practice of spreading disease was also resorted to, for the means justified the ends and an oath of allegiance to this organization was paramount to any other oath on earth.

It was after Treadkel had set forth his opinion of this organization as reported, questions and opinions went from man to man around the fire.

"Was Booth a member of this organization?"

"I think he was," Treadkel answered. "And I do not believe he was ever shot in the barn either."

"What reason have you for thinking he was not?" the Eastern contractor asked.

"I have reasons—not a reason. If Booth was shot, why was his body never allowed to be identified? Thousands of people knew Booth. What was the reason that his body should be rolled in a blanket and buried or sunk in the river or rolled under a big stone as you please? Why so many and different reports of the disposition of his body?

If Booth was in the barn why didn't the papers settle the general feeling of doubt by making public an interview with Herold who was in the barn with Booth? Herold tried to tell something and was choked off. If it was Booth in the barn where did the man go who made arrangements for Booth to go to Bowling Green? He would have been a witness worth having. Did the earth swallow him?''

''You ask questions hard to answer. But the fact remains that Garrett testified that Booth was in the barn.''

''And the same testimony sets forth Garrett's word that he never saw Booth in his life.''

''He was killed in the barn all right. I'm satisfied of that,'' the contractor said.

''A little evidence goes a long way when a body wants it too. You want to believe the assassin of Lincoln is dead.''

''You speak the truth. I want to believe. I *want* to believe he is dead and in torment. The bottom of hell is not too hot a place for John Wilkes Booth. In a general way you know Abraham Lincoln, know him as a president, a greater statesman than even Washington, for it's easier to make something than to keep those who make it from tearing it to pieces when they take a notion. But maybe you do not know him as a man, a plain man, a man with a big heart and soft as a woman's and yet filled with just plain sense. I have a bit of printing in my pocket that will show you what I mean. Stir the fire into a flame and I'll let you read it.''

The fire was brightened. Treadkel took the paper the contractor handed him and read, ''F. W. Smith, a Boston contractor was tried by court-martial and found guilty of pocketing a thousand or two thousand dollars out of a contract with the Navy Department for supplies. The report of the court-martial was sent to President Lincoln for his examination. He returned it with this characteristic indorsement:—

" 'Whereas, F. W. Smith had transactions with the United States Navy Department to a million and a quarter of dollars, and had the chance to steal a quarter of a million; and whereas, he was charged with stealing only ten thousand dollars and from the final revision of the testimony it is only claimed that he stole one hundred dollars, I don't believe he stole anything at all.

" 'Therefore, the records of this court-martial together with the finding and sentence, are disapproved, declared null and void, and the defendant is fully discharged.

" 'A. LINCOLN' "

A hearty laugh went around the fire circle at the conclusion of this reading.

Treadkel handed the paper back. He said, "I don't blame you for wanting to think the man who snuffed the life of Lincoln out is in hell. But I still say that in my opinion there's a difference between desire and opinion. If there was not doubt and plenty of it as to whether Booth was actually killed, why were not the rewards offered paid without taking the wrangle into Congress?"

"Do you think those fellows that got the man out of the barn concealed his body from the public for the purpose of getting the money?"

"I do not say they did. But none of them knew Booth. The head of the man in the barn was half shot off. They might have thought it was Booth. Of this, however, I have my doubts. The man Herold knew who was in the barn. Why were his lips ordered sealed?"

"I'd hate to think the men claiming the rewards would take it on an uncertainty."

"All men are not Lincolns. The men in this case are safe. For if Booth was not the man shot, he escaped and certain it is he will never tell it. Herold is dead. He can never tell. So if the wrangle over the rewards is ever ended and they are paid, those who get them can rest easy that no questions will be asked."

"Well, there's just this about it. If Booth did finally escape by the aid of this traitorous organization with its trusty members in high places, he's as good as dead for if he ever lets himself be known he will be torn to bits and I would help destroy him. To be sure he might change his name and appearance and come among us."

"It might be done. But Booth carries some body marks not easy to change.

"Out where they can be seen?"

"Yes, on his face I think—his cheek maybe but I'm not sure. One mark was made by a sword cut. Booth was having a duel with some other actor. A stroke went amiss and left a scar—on his cheek I'm sure. The other outside mark is a finger which was crippled in shifting stage scenery. He may have more marks. I did not pay much attention at the time. A fellow who once worked on the stage where Booth acted told me about them. He has a lot to tell about the assassin—a lot that is interesting and makes you feel someway that the young actor was not a full-fledged fiend though he is considered so."

"I cannot imagine what could be said to make me have a kind thought for him. His crime—the crime of the ages—would cast too black a shadow over whatever else he ever did or hoped to do."

"The man I'm telling you about will join us at the next stop. He's coming in from Salt Lake and will double back with us. You will have a chance to ask him some questions about Booth."

"I'll inquire about those scars. I might run across the gentleman somewhere and get part of the reward," and the contractor laughed.

After some further fireside talk the circle broke up and each man disappeared in the dark to his sleeping place.

The next morning when it came time to hitch the mules, the driver, Jesse Smith, was not to be found.

"He was a strange fellow and nothing of a mule driver. Still you don't often see them strange enough to disappear just before pay day when they haven't drawn a cent," Treadkel said to the contractor.

"No, but the world is full of funny folks. He was no fool, your missing mule driver. I noticed his face at the fire. It was keen. You may never know what it is, but he had a reason for his unexpected departure. You haven't missed a horse, have you?"

"Horse? You don't suppose that smooth-tongued gentleman was a horse thief do you?"

"It might not be amiss to count the horses."

Acting on the suggestion it did not take Treadkel long to discover that one of his best horses was gone. But whether east or west or north or south he had no means of knowing. All he could do was to advertise the theft together with description of the thief.

Long before the owner of his mount had discovered his loss, Jesse Smith was galloping over the trail the slow moving supply caravan would soon travel.

"It's my opinion," Jesse Smith said to himself, "that it is safer in this country to kill two presidents than steal one horse. But I've got to get to Salt Lake City and be well away before the caravan reaches there. There's no way for Treadkel to send word to Salt Lake to watch for me except by horse and I ride his swiftest. He doesn't know why I left and he will not know why he finds his horse waiting for him when he gets to his journey's end. But he will be as satisfied as surprised and I will not be hounded as a horse thief. The letter! Will it be there? It will be worth the hazard."

Arriving safely in Salt Lake City, the first thing Jesse Smith did was to change himself from a mule driver into a cowboy. Arrayed in the dashing outfit of the wild west

cattle chaser, with his sombrero pushed back from his black hair, spurs in evidence and gun handy, he rode to the place where Treadkel would report and delivered the horse with the information that a fellow who left the main road south at the nearest cross trail to the West, had paid him ten dollars to deliver the horse to be called for by Mr. I. Treadkel, of whom it had been borrowed.

This important business having been transacted, the cowboy hurried to the post office and inquired for a letter addressed to Jim P. Holmes.

The letter was delivered and the happy recipient sought the first quiet corner to read a message that on the written page bore no information as to where it had been written from. The eager eyes of the cowboy fell on the first words, "My darling boy."

For a second of time a mist obscured the words and unkindly fingers seemed pressing at his throat. But the message that lay in his hand was too precious to let even the sentiment of tender memories delay its reading. Again he read:

MY DARLING BOY:—

Nobody can ever know how glad I was to get your message. How I thanked God that you are alive and well! I cannot write much for I am back at your brother's and he has asked me—has warned me to be careful how I write. So for your sake and your brother's, as well as for my own, for what hurts my children hurts me more—I must be careful. Beside this, my hand is unsteady. Can you notice it in these lines? I have never wholly recovered from the terrible shock of—of last April. My fingers almost flutter at times and I find myself wanting to catch hold of them to keep them quiet.

What I write to tell you is that God willing, I will see you in December. Your brother Junius Brutus has promised to go with me to San Francisco where you will meet me. If he decides not to go, I will undertake the journey alone. It is long and an unknown way to me, but

with my boy—my darling little boy at the end, no journey can be too long.

I am sending you some more money. It is a risk to send it so without leaving a record. This must not be. It is my own money. Your father did not leave me rich. But I am not poor and as long as I have a penny it is yours—my poor little John's.

How joy and sorrow crowd together in our cup of life!

Just five months before—before last April—my cup of joy ran over the night I sat in the box at the Winter Garden Theatre and saw my three sons play *Julius Caesar!* How like the noble Roman, Junius was as Caesar! How splendidly Edwin acted Brutus! And you—my heart swells yet with pride as I see you—hear you as Mark Antony. No human lips have ever uttered that famous oration as yours did that night. I have gone over those words hearing your voice with joy. But now—Oh now when I get to these lines:

"But yesterday the word of Caesar might
Have stood against the world; now lies he there
And none so poor as to do him reverence."

I do not think of Caesar—only of my child who might, in his art, have stood against the world—but now—now. I am not as Roman mothers were said to be. Before love to my country, though I am loyal to it always, I love my children, love you—my darling child.

But I am writing too much. It seems I could write on a week—even with trembling fingers.

I live now to see you in December.

May God who loves you, even better than your mother, forgive your mistakes, pardon your sins and protect you, is the constant prayer of your mother."

A name had been signed under the last words but had been carefully erased. The cowboy knew the signature had been "M. A. Booth."

A postscript had been added. He read:

"A letter came to Bel Air for you a few days after—after April 14th. It is postmarked Washington! The handwriting is a lady's. I have not dared send it. I will bring it to you."

The generous bill enclosed in his letter pleased the cowboy. But he had money of his own. What his heart was hungry for was the assurance of his mother's love and—that other love. A few days after April 14th it had been received at Bel Air. Could it be—would it be from *her?* Bessie Hale knew the address of his mother's home, his own boyhood home. Few others among his women friends did. How far December seemed away—how long to wait for his mother and his letter.

Yet he was happy and when he joined a company on their way to California, he seemed the jolliest cowboy in the party.

CHAPTER XIX

UNDER THE STARS OF MOJAVA

THE way of the riders west was to the south. On the north trail the mountain passes were blocked with snow. But to the wide prairies and desert sounds of the south, winter did not come and for those who had not been over the long trail before there was much of interest and the dangers encountered only added pleasurable excitement.

The last lap of desert to be crossed was the far-famed sand wastes of Mojava. Here was the home of the yucca palm, a gorgeous cactus lifting its stiff foliage some fifty feet—its club-like branches making odd patterns against an ever cloudless sky.

Here too, buttes rose from the desert sand on every side, grooved and channeled by the elements until it took little imagination to see in them storied palaces and moated castles bathed in the gold of sunrise or flooded with the opal tints of the desert afterglow.

Here, too, was the magic place of mirages and the guide of the party, who had many times crossed Mojava, told of such mirages as made the famous Fata Morgana a child's story.

But to the cowboy the marvel of the desert was the stars that kept watch of its silence and solitude. Never had stars beaten so actively with the vital fire of their being. Never had their brilliancy been so purple and rose and golden-green and flaming azure.

Perhaps it was their nearness that made the stars of Mojava seem to the cowboy different from all other stars in the universe for no sooner did he lay himself down to rest at night than they silently descended so low, that it seemed he could touch their glow and palpitation if he would but overstretch his arm.

It was not until his last night in the desert, however, that the stars, of their shining silence opened to his vision the desert mysteries over which they watched.

For some reason the cowboy found himself wide awake after his companions of the journey had for a long time been asleep. The breeze blew softly as the last breathing of something weary. From the vast expanse of the foam-crested blue waters of the Gulf over far distances it had traveled inland stirring the lacy-leaved mesquite of the south into joyful dancing, rushing over unmeasured areas of sage brush with cooling touch and blowing the desert sands over the bleached bones of coyotes.

Now almost wistfully in its weariness, it touched the brow of the wakeful cowboy stirring his black hair ever so gently and waking in his heart a response for its seeming tenderness.

But the breeze did not hold his interest as did the stars. One star there was which in some peculiar way seemed to demand his attention. It was a large star, a near star, a brilliant star, and as he watched it, it seemed to settle earthward until like a glowing lamp it hung in the center of the desert flooding the sandy waste with an unearthly effulgence—or light that penetrated past the bonds of the material world.

It was through his illuminated perception the cowboy became conscious that the desert was peopled with an innumerable throng.

They did not seem to be such creatures as the mountaineer back in Tennessee had said, according to Scripture, Elisha saw. Nor were they all of a class such as this same mountaineer prophet had said numbers of soldiers had seen climbing upward from fields of the slain in battle.

This desert throng though it moved indistinctly seemed to be composed of every kind of men—men of different races and faiths and nations. While he was trying by

concentrated effort to clarify his vision that he might satisfy his mind as to the kind and purpose of this moving mass, the cowboy became aware that there walked among them an overtowering figure. From the legs which he distinguished first, his eye traveled upward, defining the tall, gaunt body of a man until the face was reached, a face flooded by the light of the low-hung star.

Nowhere in Heaven or on earth was there such another face. Well he knew it! A face seamed with sorrowful lines but beaming with tenderness and love for all the struggling little people that thronged about him. With his vision of this towering yet familiar figure there came words:—"He doth bestride the narrow world like a colossus and we petty men walk under his huge legs and peep about to find ourselves dishonorable graves."

Who said these words? Was it some one from out the myriad throng? Or was it all, who spoke?

As if to answer his question the eyes of the colossus were turned on him. Before their steady gaze he felt himself retreating, moved by their very kindliness to seek some safe retreat. Farther and farther he hurried, backing away before the searching eyes, faster and faster—until he felt the rim of the desert crumbling under his heels and he knew that the next moment he would be falling, falling—where to?

He threw out his hand to catch something—anything. What his trembling fingers came in contact with was sand—the cool sand of the bed on which his body lay.

Dazed, he looked about.

Above a butte line in the east there was a streak of pink.

He lifted his eyes.

The stars of Mojava had withdrawn to an immeasurable distance from the cowboy and had lost their lustre.

But the words, "He doth bestride the narrow world like a colossus," stayed with him.

CHAPTER XX

MOTHER'S BOY

On a December day in the year 1865, a smartly dressed and handsome gentleman entered a leading hotel in San Francisco, consulted the register and finding the names, Junius Brutus Booth and Mrs. M. A. Booth, dispatched a note which brought him a summons to the lady's room.

The lady who waited for the gentleman was no longer young. There was beauty in her face but a beauty to be guessed rather than observed clearly because of its veil of sadness. Her hair, once dark was heavily streaked with grey. By the restless motion of her fingers she was nervous. Her eyes were bright with a pitiful eagerness as she turned them to the door.

In answer to a light knock she gave a start, sank back weakly, caught her breath, arose, went with quick step to the door and opened it.

The handsome young man sprang in and caught the sad-faced woman in his arms.

Then there was the sound of sobbing broken by the words, "My little boy—my little boy! Why did you do it? John, it has broken my heart—it is *killing* me! And the grey head fell against the shoulder of the handsome young man and together the two wept in each others arms until the young man sat down and drew the woman to his knee to comfort her.

Tears were running down her cheeks. Her white hands were trembling; in one of his hands, almost as white as his mother's, and scarce less steady, the son held her fingers. He wiped the tears from her eyes and kissed her.

"My little John—how could you do it?"

"How could I? In the first place I was well stimulated. All day I had been getting myself ready for the act. For hard tasks—impossible acts, nothing can take the place of brandy in warming up the way. And then I thought it was the thing to do. A long time I had worked on a plan that I thought would end the war—and my plan was not murder. Everything was ready for my great act when Lee handed over his sword. Then there remained nothing to do but remove the cause of the trouble. It was my duty."

"Duty! My poor deluded child, God never makes sin any man's duty. If you had remembered your early teachings, if you had held to your mother's religion, you could not have done this crime. How often have I wondered why you left the faith of your fathers for an alien church. It must have been the pomp and pageantry, the purple and scarlet and gold, and the sword—the temporal sword of the Pope. You were always wild about swords."

"I have told you before but again I will tell you that not one but several reasons determined my choice of religion. For one thing I believe in purgatory. Your religion teaches that 'as a tree falls so it must lie.' Of such a belief I get no hope nor any idea of a God that inspires my reverence. Time is too short; eternity too long; human nature too imperfect. To me such doctrine is more senseless and cruel than gross fatalism. I believe in the confessional. Nothing so relieves the human heart as to unburden its sorrows and sins into some sympathetic ear, even eliminating the priestly office of forgiveness. There are other reasons in my opinion, good ones. But most of all I prefer the Church to your creed because of its practical teachings regarding intercession. You hold that there is no way to obtain the mercy of God except by the intercession of His Son. My Church holds that Mary the *mother,* interceded for men. Between the two if a soul cannot get to God to do his own pleading, I will trust my soul first to the

mother. This faith is based on my observation of mothers and sons. If for me there remains the mercy of God it will be mine through a mother."

"But John—dear child of mine—your religion did not keep you from committing this grievous sin—this awful sin against your God, against your fellow man, against your friends, against your mother—though you did not neglect the holy sacraments of your church, if printed accounts are true."

"It is true, the sacrament did not prevent the crime if that is what you are getting at. Neither did it cause it. But why waste time on this? Were you glad to hear I was not shot in that now famous barn? I got news of my escape to you as soon as I could."

"Glad? Was I glad? Glad to know your soul was not sent to its maker so soon after your terrible sin? Was I glad to know you were yet living—that I might hope to look upon your face and hear your voice? How glad I was words can never tell. And I prayed for you—how I poured out my heart before God! And I thought of the time when I held your two little hands together in prayer and taught you to say 'Now I lay me.' Do you remember it?"

The young man pressed his fingers gently against his mother's tear-stained cheek and said, "Remember it? Even as King Richard more than once I caught myself saying 'Now I lay me'," and he laughed.

"Put your cheek against mine as you did when you were little. How smooth and soft your face is, almost the same as if you once more were my little John—my baby boy. But you were so proud of your moustache. I did not expect to see you without it."

"Proud of it? Even you have said I was handsome with it," and there was boyish pleasure in the laugh which followed the words. "It was to save a neck I sacrificed a

moustache. Moustaches have been known to recover from being cut off but not so with necks. Did you happen to see a description of me in the flaming rewards offered for my capture?"

"How could I miss it? It seemed that whichever way I turned my eyes there I saw the words 'Murder! Booth! Reward!'"

"Enormous rewards. Thousands of men hunting yet here I am, sound and whole except for a limp so slight you did not notice it when I came in."

"Indeed you should be lame from that broken leg—on a crutch even! How I did suffer when I thought of you suffering and no kind hands near to minister to you. And your throat too. I thought of it and feared exposure would bring back your cough. I thought of everything. I was in the garden getting the first lilacs when news came that you had been killed. I had stood the shock of your crime well, I thought. But when I heard them say you were dead—shot—I went to pieces. They picked me up from under my scattered lilacs. I knew no more for hours. They tried to keep me from reading the details. But I found the papers and read every word—how you had been shot, your body fastened in an army blanket dripping blood along the way the rickety old wagon took. After I had read it the black had almost gone from my hair and my hands refused to lie steady."

The young man pressed his cheek against the grey hair and in silence they sat until the woman could talk again.

"It was weeks before the news came that you were yet alive. I have lain awake nights wondering about it all—who it was in the barn that had your sister's picture and other personal papers of yours. Where he got them—and why? And most of all I wondered how you made your escape."

"Barring physical discomfort, it was not so hard. In

the first place my leg was not broken. My ankle bones were cracked and I was terribly lame for a while and suffered much pain. Doctor Mudd made splints from a cigar box and bound it for me."

"Your boot was found there."

"Yes. I threw it under the bed and the Mudds did not think to destroy it. It was here also I left my moustache and acquired an old Confederate cape which made of me a very good wounded soldier. Doctor Mudd made me a good walking support of an old broom handle though I did not walk much for four or five days, being in hiding during this time. I myself will probably never know positively the identity of the man killed. It was a young fellow who had been working in the neighborhood where I secured his services. He was recommended to me by a man who knew him to be trustworthy. He carried an important message to Confederate officers for me and was to see me safely to the Rappahannock River. To escape capture I rode to the ferry in the bottom of an old negro's wagon which was covered with household goods. After I had crossed the river, I missed the contents of my coat pockets. The man who was in my service said he would get these things which we supposed had been shaken out in the wagon, and bring them to me the next day when he and Herold who was with him, were to meet me at the Garrett home. I went on to the Garrett place with the officers. The next afternoon before Herold and this other man came to Garrett's I was warned to leave. A fast horse had been provided and with two Confederate officers I escaped. Herold returned with some man—I suppose the one who had recrossed the river to get my papers. This I only suppose. It is possible he gave the papers to some other man who accompanied Herold. All I know is that Herold and some man, who it is said claimed to have but one leg, were taken in the Garrett barn. Herold—or the man with him, or both, insisted

there was a mistake in supposing this other man to be Booth—me. But no explanations were listened to though Herold could have assured them of mistaken identity had they given him a chance to open his mouth. Nobody of this brave capturing party had ever seen me, yet because of the papers found on the unknown man, they declared him to be the assassin of Abraham Lincoln. John Surratt, said in his experience as spy, he had found Federal detectives to be a set of stupid asses. To my mind it is the people who are so easily satisfied that John Wilkes Booth was shot in the Garrett barn who are the stupid asses. To put so bald a fraud over could only be done when people want to believe."

"You were identified by a scar on the back of your neck," Mrs. Booth said thoughtfully.

"Put your fingers on it," and taking her hand, the young man lifted it to his neck.

The fingers moved carefully over the surface of the skin as directed.

"Yes, it is still here. I suppose it will always be," she said touching it tenderly.

"The other man must have had a fresher one, if indeed there was a scar other than in the examining physician's imagination."

"You do not think the men who said they captured Booth would knowingly perpetrate a fraud do you?"

"Indeed I do. The easy gain of a fortune is a temptation to the best of men and in addition to the money there was the immortal glory of capturing the assassin of a president. Men? You call that gang men? What kind of a cur was it that slipped around the barn and shot the supposed Booth in the back? But let us not talk more of it. I am here and you are here and I love you."

"Mother's boy," she said pushing the black locks back from the smooth forehead.

"Mother's boy," he repeated. "Say it again—O—say it again! Of all the sweet and satisfying words I ever heard those mean the most. Just the sound of them makes me feel safe, hopeful—even good. How strange that words, just two little words seem, if only for the time, protection against every outer danger and the inner condemnation of my own wrong doing."

The woman smiled.

"Do you remember," he continued, "the time the one-eyed hound chased the goose and I thought they were both after me? Only the shelter of your skirt and those words calmed my fear."

"How tight your little fingers hung on," she said. "You were just past three years old and the sweetest child I ever had."

"Another time I remember I had been bad. I had been riding, carrying the old Mexican War sword father told me never to touch. I rode across the field and attacked a row of elderberries especially dedicated to the making of father's favorite wine and finally broke the sword on the hidden top of a fence post. Do you remember what father did to me? Smarting from the rod, humiliated, angry and utterly miserable I came to you and you said 'Mother's boy.' That was long ago."

"No. No. That was only yesterday. You are so young yet. And—" her voice broke, "life held so much of promise for you. Your brother Edwin is making a famous name—or was before you—you—." She stopped to steady her voice. "Edwin Booth—the name is honorable. But the name of John Wilkes Booth—my little John—my darling baby child—would have shone above all stage stars if he had not—had not—."

The grey head dropped on the shoulder. Muffled in sobs the question came again, "What did you do it for—O what did you? What did you?"

"It is done now and cannot be undone. Yet never did I do wrong and come to the suffering part that my mother did not help me with advice—loving advice."

"But you did not take it. That's what was the matter. You never did as your mother told you to."

"Tell me once again. I'll do as you say now."

"I wonder if you will. You have wanted to go abroad. Change your name and go now, go far, far away and remember that though your way lead you to the remotest recess of uninhabited places or the highest mountains or farthest deserts, it will never take you beyond the bounds of your mother's love."

"My mother's love! In the thicket where I first hid, I thought of it. As I made my way through the valleys and mountains of Kentucky and Tennessee, I thought of it. As I stood beside the broad and smoothly flowing Arkansas River I thought of it and said, 'As this mighty flowing stream which no man can dam, comes from a hidden spring in the mountain's heart, so my mother's love comes from some divine spring hidden in her heart. And it will flow on and on for me until it finds the open sea.' "

"The open sea!" she repeated lifting her eyes which seemed to glimpse some far vision. "The open sea! It awaits us all! But now, today we are together, and I love you. God knows I would gladly have given my life to have saved you from your awful sin. But your soul is not yet lost. To the thief on the cross who repented, the blessed Christ, said, 'This day shalt thou be with me in Paradise.' You have known a mother's love. But 'the love of God is broader than the measure of man's mind; and the heart of the Eternal is most wonderful kind.' It was this love of God in his heart that enabled the Christ to say of those who murdered him, 'Father, forgive them'."

"Was there ever a *man* murdered that would forgive his murderer?"

"Christianity teaches that only the forgiving heart need ask forgiveness of God."

"Could the soul—the spirit—of such a man come back to let a murderer know he held no hatred against him?"

"I never knew of such a case. I should not believe it if I did. One such case would establish the claims of spiritualism, a dangerous fallacy. But let us not waste time talking of subjects to be avoided for it may be years before we meet again. Some time—when you have sailed far seas and eaten bread in foreign kingdoms, you will come back. Unless I have sailed the Open Sea to God's Eternal Kingdom, I will be waiting for you."

The young man pressed his cheek against that of his mother. His voice was unsteady as he said, "I would never want to come back if my mother were not waiting for me. In all the world there is only one beside you that I love. She has promised to be my wife."

"That makes me think of your letter. I wrote you about it. It came to Bel Air not long after—April 14th."

"The letter! And after counting days until I should get it, I forgot it entirely, so charming are mothers!"

CHAPTER XXI

"STAY DEAD!"

WHILE Mrs. Booth was looking for the letter the door opened to admit Junius Brutus Booth.

The young man turned about and took an involuntary step toward the older man. Something in the expression of the face of Junius Brutus however, stopped his steps. The two men looked at each other.

"Junius," Mrs. Booth said in anxious voice, "he is still your brother."

"Not unless he wishes it," the handsome young man answered with a flash of his dark eyes.

"And he is going away—going to leave this country for years. You may never see your brother John again."

Junius Brutus Booth extended his hand. "You are my brother. I recognize you as such and you are a gentleman but you must admit you were mixed up with as black a set of crooks and traitors as can be found. John Surratt! Not in the history of human crime has there been so contemptible a desertion of a mother by a son. To save his own precious neck he left his mother to be hanged when, if he had faced the music of his own making, she might have been saved."

"It was not his own life John Surratt sought to save. He belonged to an Order. Did you ever hear of a man betraying Free Masonry? Between a mother and an oath-bound organization which would you choose?"

"Do not mention Free Masonry in the same breath with the Knights of the Golden Circle for that is what you speak of. An organization that compels a man to sacrifice his mother for any cause is fathered by the devil and

born in hell and civilized man should clean it from the face of the earth. Was that cur of a Weichmann also a member of John Surratt's order? Warmed at the fire of Mary E. Surratt, fed by the hand of Mary E. Surratt, trusted by Mary E. Surratt as a mother trusts a son, yet to save his worthless neck he turned state's evidence and strained himself to pile up damning evidence against a woman and a friend. Did he too belong to this Order—cowards and curs?"

"You are talking of 'a most toad-spotted traitor'."

"A thousand curses on such curs."

"I have no dispute to make with you. But whether you believe it happened of God or the Devil, the fact remains that John Surratt escaped and I escaped. You will at least admit that the machinery of the Order is effective unless you think it had been better if the innocent man who was shot in Garrett's barn had been in fact as is believed, your brother."

"No. I'm glad you escaped. But you will never know what we've been through and what we will have to go through again if it should ever be known that you were not shot as is believed. I suppose you have told mother how you escaped. I've wondered. But she can tell me later. We will not be here long. I have some letters to write. Continue your visit with mother. As you are going to sail soon it is likely to be a long time before you have a chance for another visit."

Junius Brutus Booth went into the next room. The young man turned to his mother saying, "Let me have the letter."

She put it in the outstretched hand of her son. She watched his face which took on a new expression as his eyes fell on the address. She saw that his fingers trembled with eagerness as he broke the seal.

It seemed that before he had read through the two

pages, his face had registered a dozen varying degrees of loss and gain, of hope and fear, of sadness and joy, with joy holding full place as he exclaimed, "Mother!—Listen," and he read, "When I said those words—'forever and forever,' before God I meant them. I mean them yet. At first when I heard of your terrible, your mad act, I could not think. I was dead—numb and dead. Then up from my dead self came that wonderful something called love and I knew that though you had killed all the presidents in all the world, while my heart would drop blood for your sins, I would love you. Of that love I send this promise. I will marry you in the shadow of the gallows. I write to tell you this. 'Forsaking all others' the marriage sacrament says. This I will do. You are hiding somewhere. I am praying that you will escape. If they capture you and bring you in, pray that I may see you for though disgrace be heaped upon you I will be your wife. My love is greater than my fear of disgrace. And if they do not capture you, if you should defend your life to the point of your own death, as knowing you I feel you would do, when your life ceases mine ends. I do not mean my body will cease to breathe. But the heart of me will be but a machine. Not knowing where to address you I send this letter to your mother, certain you will be in communication with her. I sign this as my last words to you were, 'Forever and forever.' "

"Mother!" and the young man's voice was almost reverential, "Did a woman ever before love a man well enough to make a sacrifice like this?"

"It is wonderful. But sacrifice is ever almost divine."

"I've changed my plan. When I sail the far seas she shall go with me."

"What do you mean?"

"Mean? This. I'm going to marry Bessie Hale—the girl who wrote this."

"Marry Bessie Hale? Bessie Hale thinks you are dead."

"I'll let her know differently."

"No, no! To let her know, would be to let the world know it. You are dead—dead, my son."

"But I am not going to stay dead. Shall I give up this love—this that would go to the gallows with me?"

"So you, too, would do the John Surratt act? You too would sacrifice a woman because she loves you?"

It was Junius Brutus Booth who spoke. "You claim to be a gentleman. Would you too, be a cur—a coward? She thinks you are dead. I say to you, you are dead. STAY DEAD!"

"Stay dead! Do you know what it means to be dead to your name, to your friends, to your hopes, to your love? Try it eight months as I have done. Think of it!"

"Why didn't you think of it when there was time for sane thinking? It is too late now. You have damned the Booth family enough. Your brother Edwin, with the future he had, has left the stage forever—His future is dead. I myself was all but killed by a mob for no greater sin than having the name of Booth. Living you cursed us. You are dead and dead you must remain. And when the wrath of the American people has cooled off, your body will be dug up from somewhere and buried in the Booth lot and the world will be apprised of this fact also. You are the youngest of my mother's sons. Dead, you may outlive me and Edwin and Agnes Booth. If that time shall come let the resurrection of John Wilkes Booth come with it but as long as a Booth of the name lives, you STAY DEAD!"

Junius Brutus Booth had advanced to his brother and stood before him. The face of the young man went white. His eyes flashed fire and he said, "You damn me when you make of me a living dead man."

"The act was your own."

The young man turned to his mother whose face registered an agony of pain.

"Mother shall it be death for me?"

"The wages of sin *is death.*"

"You too would condemn me to the life of a living dead man?"

"Do not think me cruel. There can be no other way. The agony of one death has already been suffered. If it is discovered that you are not dead you will be hanged—*hanged* my little boy."

"Or plucked in bits by some infuriated mob," Junius Brutus Booth added. "I know—I barely escaped it."

A moment he stood contemplating the young man and the grey-haired mother. Then he left the room.

The woman sat down. She looked up into the white face beside her and said softly, "Do not crucify your mother's heart again."

"No—no! I am not a John Surratt or a toad-spotted Weichmann to sacrifice a mother's heart. I will stay dead. By this sign which slays my heart *I will stay dead.*"

He tore the letter in fragments and held it toward his mother.

"Here it is—the most precious bit of writing ever penned. Tell her if you can sometime—that for love of my mother and to protect *her* fair name against that of the criminal of the ages, *I die*—tell her."

The young man flung himself on his knees beside his mother and buried his face in her lap. Sobs shook his slender frame.

There were no tears in the mother's eyes now. With her hands on his head she soothed him with her touch and voice, her only words being, "Mother's boy—mother's boy!"

Under the magic of the mother touch and voice the wild

grief grew calm and the man raising his face asked, "What do dead people do?"

"Rise to a new life."

"How? What does that mean? How is it done?"

"What does it mean? This. The wages of sin is death but the gift of God is eternal life. Resurrection to a new life comes first of being sorry for the sin. Not sorry for the suffering that is the penalty of sin, but sorry for the heart condition that prompted the act. Forgiveness brings peace, my son—peace to the troubled soul."

"I am too dead to understand. Let me go out. A little walk in the fresh air will get my mind in working order. Then I will come back and we will finish our plans."

"You will be sure to come. Tonight will be our last here. You know your brother. He was always saying, 'No telling what John will do next'. Now since—since—now he is more fearful than ever."

The young man arose, put his hands around his mother's face and looked long in her eyes. "I will be back," he said, deep tenderness in his voice.

He kissed her and left the room.

Out on the street he seemed as if he had been declared, a dead man. People passed and repassed him but they seemed far away and unreal.

On top of the mountain in Tennessee, when he had read of his death in the barn, he had said, "Now I am dead"; had said it seriously and solemnly. But he had not felt dead. He had felt intensely alive. Now he felt dead.

He went into a bar and took a drink. The result was good. A second drink and he felt that life might hold something for him after all.

When he returned a few hours later to the hotel where the Booths were registered, he found they had checked out.

He went onto the street and walked. He grew tired and

returned to his own hotel, took another drink and retired saying with the vacuity that is strong drink's gift, "I am a dead man."

But there was nothing vacuous about the dream which seemed awaiting his sojourn in the realm of sleep.

In the dream, the young man saw himself, his own dead body banded with serpent-like adhesions to his living body. So closely were the two bodies bound that the head of the dead body rested close to the neck at the turn of the live man's shoulder, rested as affectionately close as if its eyes were not bulging like glazed marbles and its mouth swinging open.

Always the live body was trying to pull away from the burden and always the dead kept close hold with a diabolical grip. Struggling up hills he saw himself taking his way, bent under the weight of his dead self. Descending, the dead body strove to precipitate the live one down head first. Along the edges of steep precipices he saw himself making his way pulling with terrible desperation against the dead weight and struggling through deep waters as dead as the body he carried, he saw himself flounder. But it was not until there struck his nostrils the odor of the unembalmed dead, thinly smothered with the sickening scent of dying flowers, that the realism became unbearable.

With a bound to gain fresh air, he left the bed of his horrible dreaming. The dead body had gone leaving him free when he found himself standing in the centre of his room.

He glanced at the bed. It was clean and white and almost undisturbed in its smoothness. But he had no desire to seek rest in it again.

He dressed hurriedly and went onto the street.

The hour was late. The wind blew cold. Without following any planned course the young man found himself beyond the fashionable district, well toward the docks.

From a drinking place came the sound of merriment, men talking and singing and laughing.

He entered it, went to a vacant chair behind the stove and sat down beside a round-faced sailor one of whose cheeks bore a well tattooed cock's head.

The first friendly act of the stylishly dressed and handsome newcomer was to ask the cock-marked sailor to have a drink with him.

"And 'ow much more can you 'old?" the sailor asked.

"A drink with you, Mr.—what did you say your name is?"

A grin broad enough to make the cock on his cheek raise its beak, spread the face of the sailor as he said, "Curry Chicken. Don't you know me? I'm second mate on the 'Attie Hann what puts out for Shanghai in the morning."

"Curry Chicken," the young man said, his eyes on the tattooed figure. "I see the chicken, but where's the curry?"

"It was put in the broth that was made when the 'ead you see was cut hoff."

"You're going to Shanghai? That's where I've started. Let's go together."

The stranger foreign to the place arose. The sailor followed his example.

"'And me your harm," he said putting strong fingers on the stylish overcoat sleeve. "Hif you 'it the floor with these clothes on hit'll be the 'ell of a 'ard time you'll be 'aving to get them clean. W'at did you say your name is, my 'arty?"

"They call me 'Dead Man'. Let's drink."

At two o'clock in the morning, each man trying to keep the other on his feet and steering toward the *Hattie Ann,* the pair congratulated themselves they were on the way to Shanghai.

CHAPTER XXII

ABOUT GHOSTS

It was night on the ocean. The moon, from a sky sparsely stippled with cloud-down, threw a broad pathway of golden bars from the lower curve of its rim-full splendor, to a ship, which on the shimmering surface of the sea looked like a toy at anchor.

In reality the ship was moving, its prow cutting through the waves to the music of their foaming resistance as it took its way to the far east.

Where the glowing band coming from the moon in its heaven to the boat on its sea, struck the ship side to whiten it, the name "*Hattie Ann,*" could be seen and in this same streak of light the figure of a man.

He stood in the bow of the boat. Full in the light of the moon, toward which he turned his face a time, his facial lineaments white and dim, suggested the presence of an angel in the *Hattie Ann.*

But when the face was turned from the light it no longer seemed angelic but the shadows made it dark—foreboding—sinister.

He was neither saint nor devil or perhaps he was both.

Whatever his bent, he might have been thought curious had there been anyone watching his actions. He seemed to be looking for something or somebody he thought was near him but which was not in evidence.

To the right he turned and to the left. Moving back from his place in the niche of the prow, he looked at the place where he had stood. But there was only the grey green of night on the sea with its paths and patches of moonlight and its shadows. With a last hurried glance all

about him, the man left his lonesome place and took his way to a part of the deck where there were other men.

One of them was a round-faced sailor with a cock-marked cheek. Comfortably spread on the floor his shoulders supported against a coil of rope, he smoked a short pipe—giving small grunts of satisfaction as he puffed out the smoke.

It was before this picture of marine comfort the man who had left the prow of the boat stopped.

"Curry Chicken," he said, 'Awake?' "

"I know you're 'ear. What's 'appened my 'arty?"

"There's a ghost on your *Hattie Ann.*"

"A ghost on the 'Attie Hann? Big or little?"

"Big."

"Did you see 'im?"

"No, but I felt him."

"Felt 'im? We'll w'y didn't you 'old 'im when you was feelin' 'im so I could come and 'av a peep hat 'im? I've 'eard before the 'Attie Hann is 'aunted but I've never seen the 'aunt nor *felt* it."

"I do not mean I felt the ghost I speak of as one feels with hands. I felt it as one feels a presence."

"I felt one like that once myself. 'E was a Henglish ghost w'at was 'idin' around the corner of the Blue Mug down near the docks at 'Oly-'Ead. 'E banged me. I felt 'im but I never saw 'is shape."

"Were you never aware that something you could not see with your eyes or touch with your fingers or smell with your nose was close about? What I mean is this; once I waked up in the night and *felt* something or somebody was in my room. It was dark. There was no sound, nor scent, nor touch to impress me. I simply *felt—felt* it—knew it someway. Sure enough next morning my watch was gone and I found my trousers, rifled clean, half way down the stairs and a window propped open where the thief had

entered and left. To get the watch he came so close to me I could have touched him. But it was by none of my five senses I felt his presence. It is the same way with the ghost or spirit. Three nights I have stood alone in the prow of the *Hattie Ann* to see her keel cut the waves. The foam on the waves that curl out, glows as if sprinkled with star dust. Its beautiful, and the swish sound of the waters against the plowing ship is better than music.

"But no sooner have I taken my place in the twilight to watch the dark gather, than I am aware of the ghost as if he were always there, a spirit—always riding the prow of the *Hattie Ann.*"

"If you'd see a 'aunt once you'd know there's not any such a thing."

"One reason I knew there is such a thing is because I *have seen* him."

The speaker cast a careful glance at Curry Chicken as if expecting his lips to loose their grip on the short pipe stem or his hands to be thrown out in disdain or denial or surprise.

The sailor did nothing of this kind. He took his pipe from his mouth and slowly knocked it against the sole of his boot. When it was well empty he said, "You 'ave seen 'im?"

"Tall, with a kind face but sad."

"W'ite colored?"

"Yes, White—that is vapory like."

"Did 'is bones show?"

"I'm not speaking of a skeleton."

"A w'ite ghost and 'is bones not showin'. The one I saw beats your kind, my 'arty."

"Didn't you say you never saw a ghost?"

"You 'eard me right. But I didn't know then you'd seen things too. Since you 'ave I'll tell you about the one I saw. 'E was not w'ite. He was blue and 'ad 'is bones

with 'im. Blue bones! 'Is 'ead too, it was blue. But 'e didn't 'ave no blue eyes, this ghost of mine nor no w'ite pearly teeth. Both 'oles for these parts of 'is 'ead was there but 'is eyes was each a coal of fire, red with a black streak around it. And out of 'is hempty mouth he licked a tongue like snakes lick out only this ghost's tongue was fire—not a coal but a flame. This ghost—'e could dance—God but you'd died to 'ear 'is bones rattle. From 'is 'ead to 'is 'eels 'e rattled and clacked, patting 'is hempty 'ands together and licking out that tongue of fire. I didn't feel halarmed till I see 'e was dancing toward me, clapping 'is bony 'ands and fixing to kisss me with that firey tongue. When I saw this I said to 'im, I've killed t'ree men. Come on, you blue devil, and I'll knock your rattling bones into such a 'eap they'll never be 'appy again! It was a 'ard fight I was 'aving with this ghost when I felt a t'ird party gettin' in and a voice shouting in my hear, 'I'll kick 'ell out of you if you don't roll out! Joy cups his halright for the land but hit's stiff legs for the 'Attie Hann!' It was the first mate using 'is stiff legs. The ghost disappeared."

The man who had stood in the ship's prow laughed heartily.

"I was not thinking of that kind," he said. "My ghost has shown himself twice; both times I was never more sober in my life."

"Must be the ghost of the man you killed," and Curry Chicken refilled his pipe.

"The man I killed!" and there was the expected surprise in the exclamation.

Curry Chicken laughed.

"Yes—the man you killed. Whenever you find a man like you leavin' 'Frisco without no more than 'is coat and 'at, you can put it up 'e's some gambler hand 'as done more than lose 'is pot. Besides, my 'arty, I knew your

tongue was twisting out a lie w'en you said your name was 'Deadman'."

"I'll admit my name isn't 'Deadman.' My name is Richards—H. B. Richards. But the other—"

"Don't need to make apologies. I've killed t'ree and I 'aven't lost sleep nor flesh over hany of the t'ree. If you do it right w'en you're doin', they know better than to show 'emselves, my 'arty."

"If you do not mind telling, how did you do it?"

Curry Chicken laughed heartily.

"Want directions so next time you find hit necessary to put one out of the way you'll know 'ow to do it so's to make it plain 'e better keep 'is ghost where 'e's gone? My rule his strike quick and 'ard. Quick before 'e 'its you and 'ard so 'e's got no come back. My first two went that way. At that time I was on the *Pelican* sailing from Canton to Macao. We left Canton with a lot of Chinese passengers and a few Europeans, not knowing they were pirates, on board. They came on with the Chinese, 'id their harms and hintentions until we 'ad cleared the Bogue forts. Then these pirates raised a row in the cabin which drew the captain. 'E was knocked down and killed. Next the purser was killed. By this time the fight was on with murderin' hand robbin' hand cursin' hand cuttin' hand shootin'. I got my two. One didn't 'ave hany eyes left to see with if 'e'd been living to look. The others 'ead was lost. I 'it 'ard. It was after that—four years—I finished a native down toward the Pelew Islands. Ever 'eard of the Pelews? Not many 'ave. I know the islands in those waters. Nice place to sail unless you run into a monsoon. But getting back to ghosts, since you 'ave eyes for 'em, you'll get your fill for the 'Attie Hann is on 'er way to Shanghai—to China—land of a million ghosts. They 'ave haltars in every 'ome and keep incense burning in their

temples. The ghosts follow the perfume back 'ome from the ten depths of 'Ades."

"They do have funny customs in China like binding the feet. Where did the poor heathen ever get the idea such deformities are beautiful?"

"The poor 'eathen got the idea that 'golden lilies'—the name of their feet, is beautiful, my 'arty, from the same place your kind get the idea waists like wasps is beautiful. It's all in gettin' used to things."

"Like eating with chop sticks."

"Yes and building monuments to virtuous widows who commit suicide so as to be with their lords and masters in ghost land."

"That's carrying love a long way don't you think?"

"As far as ghosts go. Maybe your ghost that rides the prow of the 'Attie Hann is back lookin' for 'is woman. Wasn't a 'eathen Chinee was 'e?" and Curry Chicken laughed. "If 'e was you'll 'ear strange music when you get to Shanghai and you won't get away from it—a sort of wailin', 'owling, god-forsaken moan. You will 'ear it by rivers and ponds; over the city walls by door sills—day hand night. It's the callin' back of the dead. Better leave your ghost on the 'Attie Hann w'en you set foot on Chinese soil."

"Let's leave the ghost question and talk about something else, something pleasant like love."

"Love—that brings in the woman—'er other name is 'Cuckoo'."

"'Cuckoo?'" Mr. Richards repeated laughing. "But not all women are married women."

"W'at is not 'as the same 'abits as w'at is. I've known 'em from Liverpool to Sidney, from Frisco to Canton. They laugh with their mouth, but not too much. They tease with their eyes—but not too much; They wiggle hand sigh—not too much. They coax—but not too much. The

man—the blithering fool—'e does *too much.* You're not the man, my 'arty that doesn't know what Curry Chicken is talkin' about whether her body is pinched in at the middle and covered with silk, or whether flabby bosomed, she's running naked in the South Sea islands—a cuckoo's a cuckoo. A man's a man and they're all fools.''

To the man who stood in the prow of the boat, as twilight deepened into night, his days on the *Hattie Ann* passed pleasantly.

Sometimes the presence of the spirit was so near and insistent it disturbed memories that for the time might otherwise have been pleasant. At such times Curry Chicken was a sure antidote for a fit of despondency.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE SHIP IN THE MIRROR

By the time Hong Kong was in sight, the crew and passengers of the *Hattie Ann* were counting days until their long journey should end.

Past the city with its long line of "hongs" and white fronted houses, with Victoria Peak looming in the rear, the ship kept her course until at last in the Channel of Formosa the distant and indented coast-line of the "Celestial Empire" could be seen. Here the water was dotted with curious Chinese boats with bamboo sails which rolled and pitched on the rough waves in an alarming manner while slowly plowing their way.

As their destined port came into view its outlying waters grew thick with boats of many kind from ugly looking junks with immense sails made of matting supported by long bamboo strips to flower-decked pleasure craft. All alike, however, possessed two big strange eyes painted on the prow for, as Curry Chicken explained, a boat could better sail without a pilot than without eyes to see where it was going.

Among myriad boats were included house boats alive with children tied by the pig-tails to upright sticks so that they might kick and splash without falling into the water.

In Shanghai Curry Chicken, who expected to make another trip soon but who promised to look up his "'arty" upon his return, left Mr. Richards who inside of a week was working for an American tea company.

There were in Shanghai a number of United States Army officers who, together with other resident Americans, had formed a club for the study of Shakespeare. It was

not long before Mr. Richards, who it had been discovered was an admirer of Shakespeare, was invited to study the immortal bard with this group. Quite naturally from study, interest developed into desire for reproduction and these drama lovers decided to produce Richard III.

Long before this, the dramatic talent of Richards had so well developed he was the unanimous choice of the organization for Richard and the wisdom of their choice was clearly demonstrated in his rehearsals. "Almost as good as a professional," he heard them say, and alive with pride and keen with ambition he was glad he had taken his mother's advice and gone to a country far from his native land. It seemed also, that he had, though he knew not how, taken Curry Chicken's advice and left the ghost on the *Hattie Ann*. The mysterious Voice, so disconcerting in its familiarity, seemed also to belong to the past he had left.

This past, however, he was not allowed to forget. One word there was which, arrow-like, pierced its way with disturbing pain into his best guarded place of memory.

That word was "Lincoln."

During the hours when these Americans in China had time to talk, the late lamented President of their homeland was mentioned more than once. They told stories about him and speculated upon the purpose and fate of his murderer. At these times there came over Mr. Richards a miserable restlessness, which he did his best to conceal. But there was one discussion centering around Abraham Lincoln in which he could scarcely hide his peculiar interest. This rose over the reading of an article in an American newspaper by a correspondent who had attended what he called a spiritual *soiree* in the crimson room of the White House to test the wonderful alleged supernatural powers of Mr. Charles E. Shockle. The information it purported to give penetrated Richards mind and stuck there, raising a question.

After telling who, in addition to President and Mrs. Lincoln, were in the party, one of them, Secretary Stanton, the correspondent said,[1]

"It was nearly nine o'clock before Shockle was fully under spiritual influence; and so powerful were the subsequent manifestations, that twice during the evening restoratives were applied, for he was much weakened.

"About nine o'clock the forces whatever they were, began to work. Several tables were moved, a picture of Henry Clay hanging on the wall was swayed more than a foot and two candelabras presented by the Dey of Algiers to President Adams, were twice raised nearly to the ceiling.

"Then loud rappings were heard directly beneath the President's feet and Mr. Shockle stated an Indian desired to communicate.

" 'Well, sir,' said the President, 'I should be happy to hear what his Indian majesty has to say. We have recently had a visitation from our red brethern, and it was the only delegation black, white or blue which did not volunteer advice about the conduct of the war.'

"The medium called for pencil and paper which were placed on the table in front of all. A handkerchief taken from Mr. Stanton was spread over the writing material concealing it completely. In about one minute knocks were heard and the paper was uncovered. It bore a message: 'Haste makes waste but delays cause vexations. Give vitality by energy. Use every mean to subdue. Proclamations are useless; make a bold front and fight the enemy; leave traitors at home to the care of loyal men. Less note of preparation, less parade and policy talk and more action.' This writing was signed 'Henry Knox.'

" 'That is not Indian talk, Mr. Shockle,' said the President. 'Who is Henry Knox?'

"It was suggested the medium inquire who Henry Knox was. Before the question was shapen its answer came written, 'The first Secretary of War.'

" 'O, yes, General Knox,' said the President, who, turning to the Secretary said, 'Stanton, that message is for you;

[1] Recorded p. 337, "Anecdotes and Incidents of the Civil War," by Frank Moore.

it is from your predecessor.' To this Mr. Stanton made no reply and the President asked the medium another question.

"'I should like to ask General Knox, if it is within the scope of his ability to tell us, when this rebellion will be put down.'

"In the same manner as before, this message was recorded: 'Washington, Lafayette, Franklin, Wilberforce, Napoleon and myself have held frequent consultations on this point. There is something which our spiritual eyes cannot detect, which appears well formed. Evil has come at times by removal of men from high positions, and there are those in retirement, whose abilities should be made useful to hasten the end. Napoleon says, concentrate your forces upon one point; Lafayette thinks the rebellion will die of exhaustion; Franklin sees the end approaching as the South must give up for want of mechanical ability to compete against Northern mechanics. Wilberforce sees hope only in a negro army.—Knox.'

"'Well,' exclaimed the President 'opinions differ among the saints as well as among the sinners. They don't seem to understand running the machines among the celestials much better than we do. Their talk and advice sound very much like the talk of my cabinet.'

"After this there were more questions and answers, none of which seemed to impress the President more than some unusually interesting entertainment would until the lights which had been partially lowered, became so dim the features of those in the room could not be distinguished, while, at the same time there appeared on the large mirror over the mantel-piece, the most beautiful, though supernatural picture ever beheld. It was a sea view, a sailing ship but a scene impossible of description. The sea out of which this strangely beautiful ship had sailed, was dark. The bounds toward which it made its way were aglow with a light soft as the pink flush of dawn, clear as the burning gold of noonday and delicate as the opal tinted afterglow at evening—an unnatural combination but all there. Another peculiarity of this ship was, that whether the light it sailed in came from sun or moon or stars, its spread sails cast no shadow with their going.

"Though this beautiful ship remained on the mirror but

a moment, its appearance made a deep impression, especially on the President.

"As Mr. Shockle was much prostrated after this, and at Mrs. Lincoln's request, it was thought best to adjourn the seance.

"It was learned after the death of the President that several times before, he had seen the vision of a sailing ship and always as a premonition. Before the death of his little son, Willie, he saw the ship and according to Mrs. Lincoln, he had caught a passing glance of it but a few days before his own death'."

Whether the story were true and, if so, to what the forces back of the phenomena were, Mr. Richards did not question. It was by the appearance of the strange but beautiful ship in the mirror his mind had been impressed; impressed so powerfully he feared for the moment his facial expression might call forth a question, for riding the prow of this substantless ship he saw the ghost which unvisualized by him had ridden the prow of the *Hattie Ann*.

And in the moment of this, to him a revelation, he heard words—his mother's words—"That Open Sea of God's Eternal Kingdom."

Yet it was not from the mouth of his mother the words came—that mother separated from him by thousands of miles of land and sea.

It was the Voice.

With him the spirit, quietly, unobtrusively—but clearly—had sailed the seas. Had the Voice on wings of incredible swiftness also accompanied him or was it omniscient?

CHAPTER XXIV

OM, MANI PADME, OM!

For a few days the reaction of Richards from his impression of the ship in the mirror had the effect of such a dream as enters into the warp and woof of the mental substratum.

This indefinite though realistic impression in which the ghost, Lincoln himself and the man's mother seemed potentialities, was not unpleasant save that it caused an alert uneasiness that threatened to interfere with his work in Richard III.

This passed, however, and his enthusiasm returned to be with him as he had no reason to doubt, until the finish of an artistic success.

In this opinion he had not taken account of the temperamental environment which Fate seemed to have thrown around him since April 14th, 1865.

A second disquieting experience awaited the few weeks that should bring it to pass.

Among the Americans who met socially in Shanghai was a traveler by the name of Decker who had spent many years traveling in India, Thibet, Burma and Ceylon, and who was considered by some a little queer. The reason was not hidden; Decker was an investigator of Eastern magic. He claimed to believe in certain miracles alleged to be performed by Hindoo adepts and esoteric initiates.

"There are," Mr. Decker always contended, "such things as natural forces or substances on this planet of ours, which have, as yet, eluded the grasp of Western science—forces which our chemists and physicists can neither gauge, weigh nor measure. There is a possibility that among a subtle race like the Hindoos, which is immeasurably older in civilization and experience than our own,

some of these forces may have been discovered, even thousands of years ago, and preserved among the wisest of its representatives, who in consequence of such knowledge can perform feats which to our limited understanding are perfectly miraculous. Owing to that intense love for solitary meditation which has been one of their characteristics from time immemorable the Hindoo has acquired mental faculties of which our race is usually deficient. They may not have succeeded by their speculation in solving any great fundamental problem. But they have discovered a number of strange facts of which we Westerners are practically ignorant. One of their earliest triumphs in this direction was the discovery and application of that strange psyshic force called hypnotism."

There was never overdue interest in Mr. Decker's discussion of Eastern magic when he talked philosophically. But when it came to incidents of his travels and especially to stories of the wonders in magic he had seen, interest grew keen and some of his stories he had been many times called on to repeat.

Heading the list of magic stories there were two which in the opinion of all Western travelers or residents in the Orient, were most unbelievable. These were the so-called mango feat and the *ne plus ultra* of Yoghi achievement, the celebrated rope feat.

It was the story of the mango trick Richards heard for the first time from Mr. Decker.

Invariably, before beginning his story, as if it were a matter of duty with him to leave no false impression in the minds of his hearers, Mr. Decker explained the difference between the fakes and pundits, common jugglers, and those adepts of a higher science called Yoghis, the later, like prophets of old, as he explained, working never for money, nor applause but as a means of conviction after what Westerners would call a sermon or a lecture.

"I shall never forget the day," he began, "nor the state of my feelings when I saw the mango feat for the first time. It was in a large public square at Agra, a famous city of the river Jumna in northern India. This city was at one time the capital of the great Mogul Empire. It is visited now because of the Taj Mahal.

"In the center of the large square in Agra a Yoghi planted a mango. There were present about three hundred people forming a large circle of about eighty yards in diameter. In the center stood the Yoghi. Some of the people came to within ten yards of him. Most of them kept about forty yards back.

"You know what a mango is—a tropical fruit about the size of a large pear. It grows on a tree from forty to a hundred feet high.

"The Yoghi dug a hole in the ground about six inches deep, planted the mango in it and covered it with earth. I now expected to see a modification of a well-known trick practiced by Western conjurers who bring a plant from a flower pot in a short time after the bean or pea is planted, by the quick lime process.

"Instead of seeing the tiny shoot of a mango creep slowly out of the soil to unfold its leaves and grow six or eight inches high, I was startled to see, in the air above the spot where the mango had been buried, the form of a large tree. At first it presented mere hazy outlines; but it became visibly more distinct until at length there stood as natural a tree as ever I had seen in my life—a mango tree fifty feet high, in full foliage and with mangoes on it.

"All this happened within five minutes of the burying of the fruit. I was so intensely surprised at what I beheld I could hardly realize the fact that I was not dreaming. There stood a tree, to all intents and purposes as natural as any tree could have appeared to human eyes—a huge tree, with a stem at least two feet in thickness at its base. And

yet there was something strange about this tree—something unearthy, something grewsome. There was a weird rigidness about it, not one leaf moving in the breeze; it stood there as if carved out of some hard solid like an obelisk. Another curious feature I noticed—the leaves seemed to obscure the sun's rays, and yet I could not detect a particle of shade; it was a tree without a shadow.

"But the most amazing thing of all was this; after having gazed at it for about two or three minutes, I slowly approached it, wishing to make a closer examination of the stem and if possible to secure some of the leaves. Now, in proportion as I drew near, the tree seemed to lose its distinctions; its outlines became blurred and faded, so that I had to strain my eyes to retain the impression of its form, until, when about ten yards from the supposed stem, the apparition had completely vanished. Only the Yoghi stood there and he smiled as he caught my eye, but his look was such I shall not easily forget. Nor did my surprise end here for no sooner had I commenced retracing my steps, than the outlines of the tree appeared once more growing more distinct with every step till, at last, when reaching the spot where I had originally stood, it had resumed the same marvelous reality. Precisely the same thing happened when, instead of approaching the tree, I went farther away from it.

"The mango tree had now been in view fully twenty minutes during which a large concourse of people had gathered. The Yoghi, who until now had not opened his lips, placed a small mat of cocoanut fibre on the ground and squatted down on it, Eastern fashion, with his legs crossed, which was interpreted by the people as a sign that he wanted to address them. The Hindoos squatted down likewise, most of them coming to the side where they could see his face. It was a most impressive sight, this silent multitude of dark-eyed orientals—and there was a sincerity,

repose and attentiveness such as few speakers find in a Western audience. It was easy to perceive that the listeners were profoundly impressed with the Yoghi's preaching, and as for myself I had become so absorbed I seemed to forget time and space. I certainly did not notice what afterward startled me more than anything, the disappearance of the tree. When the Yoghi had finished his discourse the tree was gone. It must have vanished suddenly and yet the precise moment of its disappearance nobody could tell. The Yoghi quietly arose, folded up his mat then went to the spot where the tree had stood and kneeled down, taking from a small bundle under his arm, a short stick.

"With this he stirred up the earth and in a few moments brought out again the fruit which he had planted.

"I was very close to him at the time and he allowed me to take the fruit in my hand. It was an ordinary mango —an unripe one, apparently for it felt rather hard. I expressed my surprise at his wonderful powers. He only smiled. I then offered him two rupees and tried to engage him in conversation, but he refused the present on the ground that a Sâkhya was not in need of money, he begged to be excused, he had a great way to go. So he walked off rapidly and I saw him disappear in the crowd leaving me utterly bewildered and more than ever conscious of that saying which Shakespeare puts into the mouth of Hamlet, that there are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamed of in our philosophy."

Among those who heard Mr. Decker's mango tree tale, none was more interested than Mr. Richards. It was the second mango tree story, however, that developed this interest into an acute stage.

"Five times I have witnessed the famous mango feat in various parts of India. On one occasion I saw it performed in a little village near Serinagur in the vale of Kashmir in

the Himalayas by a certain Ram Sûrash, a traveling Rishi from Thibet. This must have been a greater Yoghi, and I am almost afraid to record this experience as it may be deemed utterly incredible. Yet I am telling here no idle fairy tales. The mango tree which this Rishi produced did *not* vanish in proportion as I approached it, but retained its full realism, and I not only touched it, but actually climbed several feet up its stem."

It was the speaker's assertion that he had touched the phantom tree that gave Mr. Richard's interest its superlative quantity. Like a ghost, the apparation of the tree was real or unreal. Not by the eyes but by the touch could its reality be proven. The ghost of his observation had seemed to be friendly. He decided if it should appear again, to try to shake hands with it or at least touch it.

For Mr. Richards this was a bold determination and a sense of pleasurable comfort came with it, a comfort that lasted, however, only until his fated second disquieting experience.

This came a few days after he had heard the mango tree story when Mr. Decker introduced to the American party a middle aged Hindoo he had previously met who happened to be in Shanghai for a short time.

Most of the gentlemen who met the Hindoo on this occasion wore white. Mr. Richards, himself attired in a freshly laundered suit, had occasion to remember the whiteness of his apparel as had several others.

As was natural, conversation with the Hindu turned to Mr. Decker's favorite subject and while he was not a Yoghi, the visitor was asked to give some exhibition of the magic powers he was supposed to possess. Disclaiming any such power, he at last yielded to the request of the Americans and told them if they would provide water in a small vessel from which it could be poured, he would show them a trick.

Into the water he emptied a powder taken from a fold

in his turban. He stirred it carefully with a long, slender forefinger and then bidding each gentleman hold his hand so that its palm would make a little bowl, and to gaze steadfastly into that which he poured into each man's hand not more than a tablespoonful of inky black fluid as he did so commanding silence and every man's eye on his miniature black pool.

For a moment there was intense silence. Richards was not the first to break it. There was an exclamation and another; there was a peal of laughter; there was a curse, to none of which Mr. Richards paid any attention. His dark eyes were turned to his darker palm in a gaze of fascinated interest for in that tiny pool he saw a moving picture—he saw himself running—running as if with winged heels. But what was he running from? His face went white as he saw it—an empty noose. With an unuttered curse he tried to fling the black pool from his hand. But not all fell to the earth and a second fierce shaking spattered his spotless garments with stains from the sinister palm-pool. Nor did it afford Mr. Richards any satisfaction in the first moments of his embarrassment to know he was not the only one whose white garments bore stains of the Hindoo's magic fluid.

The evening following the day of the Hindoo's visit was practice night for Richard III.

But Mr. Richards did not appear. The message he sent was that he was not well, might not remain long in Shanghai and had decided not to take part in the play.

After much persuasion however, Mr. Richards consented to act his part and preparations continued for the production.

For resident Americans and visiting foreigners the presentation of Richard III in Shanghai was an event and a crowd greeted the Shakespearean artists. Mr. Richards was easily the star and after an especially fine piece of act-

ing, an ardent admirer of Edwin Booth, who happened to be in the audience, thereby to compliment the brilliant amateur shouted, "Booth! Booth!"

It was at this moment the play ended in tragedy before its time, for Mr. Richards became suddenly ill and was unable to finish his part.

"It is my heart," he explained to his alarmed companions of the play. "I should not have undertaken it. But no cause for alarm. I'll be all right if I can get rest."

So he went home to rest and the spectators of Richard III, went home to praise the star, express regret at his indisposition and congratulate themselves it came so near the end of the play they lost little.

A short time before this Mr. Richards had seen Curry Chicken who had said he would be sailing south in a few days. He lost no time in trying to find the former second mate of the *"Hattie Ann."* His effort was successful.

"Curry Chicken," he said, "I'm leaving Shanghai. Any chance of being dropped by your ship at those unknown Pelew Islands you like so well? I didn't tell you my business—didn't intend to follow it for a few months. But I'm a writer—a book writer. I've got to get in some quiet place to finish an important work."

"Nothin' like this 'as ever been done hat the Pelews. But I guess they can stand it. Our course is not far from there. You can be dropped if your palm carries a coin; and w'at's more, we can pick you up on our way back. I'm not sayin' the Pelews will make a 'appy 'ome for a Frisco gambler turned book writer."

"I have the money all ready. When will we get there?"

"That depends , my 'arty, on 'ow long we stop at Singapore. But it will not be for long and the port is full of hinterest if you 'aven't been there."

"Sweet are the uses of adversity which like the toad, ugly and venemous, wears yet a precious jewel in his head,"

Mr. Richards said to himself as he purchased writing material preparatory to a sojourn on some one of Curry Chicken's restful islands.

"I will write a book—I will in fact—a life story of haunts and whispering voices and long pursuits and a living love to be forever unrequitted."

There was only one day in Singapore. This day Mr. Richards never forgot.

Walking about to see the place and its people, for here were people from all the countries of the far East, he came upon a group seated on the shore of some water with running waves, as Mr. Decker had described the people sitting in his mango tree story. This group was not large and there was no hint of there being any mango tree act. By his appearance the man teaching was a Yoghi, however, and those about listened with wrapt attention.

Seeing that the foreigner was interested, a dark skinned man wearing the dress of a European, beckoned him to his side.

Casting his eye in the direction of the Yoghi, the man said softly, "It is the great Ram Sûrash! He can do the mango feat—but not in Singapore."

Mr. Richards at the name, "Ram Sûrash," all intent, dropped quietly on the sand and turned his eyes to the teacher who sat cross legged on his mat, his hands one above the other, resting upon the upper portion of his abdomen. He was speaking, earnestly but not loud.

"He is saying," the man said who had invited Mr. Richards to sit beside him, "that the abdominal brain, over which he holds his hands, is the center of intuition—perception, as the brain is the center of the five so-called senses."

The voice of the translator was soft and musical—a voice belonging to a body that should wear a yellow robe

rather than conventional Western garments, Mr. Richards thought.

The Yoghi, after an impressive pause, lifted one of the hands from his abdomen and with a long finger pointed to the water and spoke again.

"He is illustrating the mystery of life," the man said to Mr. Richards. "See what his finger points to—the two small waves running side by side? One carries decaying matter. It is a dirty wave. One carries sunlight and white foam. It is a clean wave. Yet both are of the same sea. He says there is one whole—all life is one life and besides it there is no other. As with waves, so with men; one will go back into the whole—the sea; to be purified, The other will go back to help purify. He is done."

"Om, Mani Padme, Om!"

It was the Yoghi speaking.

"You do not know what that means?" the interpreter asked Mr. Richards.

"No, what does it mean?"

"Oh, the Jewel in the Lotus!"

"What's that?"

"The Jewel is your soul. As the dewdrop is the Lotus, which is its dwelling place for a time, reflects the universe, so your Jewel in its Lotus for a time reflects the soul of the Universe and then, "Om Mani Padme, Om." The Sunrise comes! The dewdrop slips into the Shining Sea!"

CHAPTER XXV

A DAUGHTER OF THE GAME

FRONDED palms; the motion of the water; the music of waves; warm sea mists—and a woman.

In after years, to the man who had been frightened from Shanghai by the word "Booth," his days on Pelew Island were but a memory save the woman who stood unforgettable against the tropical background—and always a taunting reminder of man's weakness.

When he landed on the island the man who had left China gave his name as Eugene Bertner. His country as England. His business that of a writer. He was making a two-year trip around the world and had stopped here to rest and write.

The only white men on the island were two sailors who alternated with a second two in collecting small lots of copra and sandal wood, which was taken to market on cargo ships, the two sailors paying freight charges on their small possessions by deck work.

The two who received Eugene Bertner made his welcome cordial and when he told them to call him "Gene," their pleasure was marked enough to call to his mind the Shakespearean observation, "O what a goodly outside falsehood hath."

Gene Bertner's intention to write a book was sincere. He had stopped off at the island for that purpose and was prepared with materials for the work. But he very soon found that desire was not ability to put in words the welling up within him that cried for expression. He had not analyzed the urge. He only knew he suffered unrest which he thought the writing of something might cure.

But days passed and no book materialized. Yet always those first days he felt that he was getting ready.

His tent was in a palm grove well back from the water line. Between the grove and the sea there was a stretch of sand that girded the island. Off to one side there was a solitary upstanding rock like a buckle on this sandy belt. By some volcanic upheaval, ages and ages before, this rock had been thrust up and its feet embedded in corals that showed red and black through the clear water. On the sea side, the centuries of incessant wave effort had washed a cup-shaped cavern.

It was from the sea the writer expected inspiration for his work. The sea was moody like himself. But the summer sea in which the island was a dot, seemed friendly. It was also profoundly mysterious and in its early stages mystery is alluring.

So, the would-be writer, Gene Bertner, spent much time alone by the sea. Sometimes it was on the sand where the waves rippled and shimmered like silver ropes in flux, their music langurous, palpitating.

More often in the heat of the day he spent hours in the shade of the red- and black-footed rock. Here he listened to the ceaseless pounding of the waves as they seemed seeking with watery inquisitiveness to intrude into some secret place sealed to their invasion. Time passed uncounted here.

The first message the man received from the sea was not conducive to inspiration.

"Will all great Neptune's ocean wash this blood clean from my hand?" was the question suggested by the sea as he stood one day with his eyes on the shimmering waste. And the answer seemed to come that his hand would sooner turn the green sea red.

He turned his back on the sea. The sun was making of the sandy belt a girdle of gold, fretted on its edge with the shadow pattern of palms. It was beautiful and not disturbing.

The accusing mood of the sea was disturbing for the moment but soon passed. There was, however, a mood of the sea that gripped him and did not easily let go. At first it came when the little waves lapped lightly—a tender dreaminess that like a gentle opiate stilled the growing unrest in his bosom. This was in the daytime when the sun shone and the palms cast graceful shadows. At night it was different. The dreamy rhythm changed to a murmur that grew into a moaning, the moaning of dead seas on dead shores—a hopeless and eternal kind of moaning from which came to the lone man an overpowering melancholy.

When this mood first came over him, Gene Bertner tried to write—to work off emotional excess. But nothing satisfactory was ever completed and after some weeks of fruitless effort he determined to sail farther East and in the Indian Archipelego visit one after another of the islands that freckle it until he had worn off his unrest and growing melancholia.

It was the coming of the woman that changed his plans and turned him back in the direction of the land of his birth. She came with her husband on a boat one day. Gene Bertner watched her as with her husband she walked the distance between the water's edge and the palms where natives had carried luggage and were putting up a tent.

Who this white couple was or why they had come to this island he perhaps would never know, no more than they would know who he was. He did not care about this. He wondered what the woman would look like.

That evening he met the two. It was with some pride his companions introduced him to the strangers as a writer of books. Nor was the interest of the strangers lacking after he had been thus described. Especially was the woman interested.

"A writer of books. If only I could be put in a book!"

There was childlike appeal, simplicity and enthusiasm in her expression seemingly at variance with the mature and sinuous lines of her body.

"Is your book full already of people? Is there any little corner left where another could slip in?"

There was honesty in Gene Bertner's reply when he told her he could and would be happy to give her a corner in his book. Perhaps from the woman he might get an inspiration that would start his writing toward material realization.

"May I go in the book?" the woman asked her husband.

The man gave his consent and it was agreed that the author should talk with the woman the next day preparatory to introducing her into his story.

The following day, after a long siesta, the writer set forth to the beach. The sun had not yet dropped behind the palms and there was a glare from the sand. But the breeze was refreshing, the murmur of the waves inviting and to his favorite place of reflection in the shadow of the rock he took his way.

So flat was she lying and so sand-like the color of her scanty attire, Gene Bertner did not see the woman until he came upon her stretched at full length on the sand. She lay quite still seemingly asleep until he was standing over her. Then the lids of her narrow eyes lifted and he saw the eyes.

The expression in them was not that of a child. She had not come into the shade of the red and black footed rock to be put in a book.

A revulsion of feeling swept over the man as his eyes took in the sensuous lines of a body wearing only the apparel of some South Sea island woman.

He turned away.

There was a rustle of the grasses on her skirt and the

tinkle of small metal ornaments on her ankles, noises snakey like in their stealthy stirring.

The next moment she was by his side—quite close. But she did not touch him. She did not speak to him.

A moment he stood, his eyes turned seaward. Then, rather indifferently he quoted some descriptive words; "The beachy girdle of the ocean is too wide for Neptune's hips."

"Hips."

How could so much of meaning, of abandon, of suggestion be spoken in one word. The thought flashed across the man's mind.

He turned to meet her eyes. Fascinating eyes they were—laughing—mocking—teasing eyes that looked into his from under their veiled lids. Eyes shining like those of a snake and yet keen with human purpose.

Curry Chicken knew her kind. Shakespeare also knew—knew her kind well when he said, "There's language in her eye, her cheek, her lip; Nay, her foot speaks; her wanton spirits look out at every joint and motion of her body—*a daughter of the game.*"

"You do not like my dress," she said assuming again a childish tone, of disappointment this time.

"I am not accustomed to this kind. In England our women wear more covering on their bodies."

"You like your women with bodies under cover?"

"Yes."

"In books you mean?"

Was the remark artless? He did not look into her eyes.

"So you do not want me in your book this way?" she said after a moment of silence. "Good-bye," and she was gone.

The next time he saw her was in the moonlight two days latter when she came with her husband to the tent of Gene Bertner's companions. Here at the close of the

day the one woman and the four men in their island solitude-girt around by a boundless sea, talked and laughed and smoked in such comradeship as the instinct of the herd makes easy.

The woman had little to say but her few words were modest and well chosen. Until the moon rose Bertner could not see her. But when it had cleared the water's rim and rolled up over the silver sea he was charmed with the picture she made in the pale glow. Her face, her arms, her neck, all white against a dark background and a beauty that made the woman he had met on the sand unreal—her coarseness a mistake.

It was not until the men engaged in a conversation pertaining to matters in which neither the woman nor Gene Bertner were interested, that she moved near him and said in a soft and apologetic voice, "I am sorry I offended you by my dress. It was a princess' costume from Borneo. I mistook you for an artist. Instead you are a writer. You will pardon me for not knowing the two are different."

There was a simplicity and honesty about the woman's voice that was alluring and the suggestion of a quaver made an appeal.

"Do not mistake my meaning. It was only that I did not want you in my story as a heathen. Why sacrifice yourself?"

"Then I have not been dismissed finally?"

"By no means. We will talk again tomorrow if we may."

"Tomorrow."

"In the shade of the cup-washed rock."

So a second time the writer met the woman in the shadow of the coral-footed rock. This time he waited for her; arose from the cool sand where he lay, to meet her.

"Shall we sit down?" she asked, "or perhaps—" and

she lifted her slant eyes to his questioningly. Her manner was dignified and her voice accusingly innocent.

He motioned to the sand.

They sat down.

"Now about the story—the book I wanted to be in," she said. "Is it a love story?"

"Yes. Why do you ask?"

"I was wondering if you know anything about love. At first I was sure of it. Then—then I changed my mind. Now again—" she hesitated.

"Must a man be in love to write a love story?"

"Indeed yes."

"I am qualified then, and if my book even approaches in quality the woman I love—ah—it will be a real book."

"She must be very beautiful—very virtuous."

With his declaration of love for a woman, Gene Bertner had turned his eyes to the bounds of the shining sea. His vision was far away and his voice one of reverence as he said, "She is like white lilacs on a fresh-leaved bush in spring."

"Betrothed—I judge."

"And you—you are married."

"Am I?"

"Are you not a wife?"

"Sometimes."

A moment he looked again across the boundless sea. Then with a sigh but half suppressed he threw himself on the sand and covered his face with his cap.

Very soon he felt hands beneath his head.

"I am giving you a pillow so you can think better of your far away love."

It was on the turn of a minute— as she raised his head that the man's cheek brushed the round curve of a woman's breast.

"You are hot." The woman's lips were close above his

forehead as she spoke. "I will cool you while your mind is far away where white lilacs grow."

With the cool breeze of a fan there came the scent of sandal wood. He had not noticed that she carried a fan.

Slowly the air was pushed into a refreshing current over his face and the mildly intoxicating fragrance like faint temple incense filled his nostrils. Then there was the touch of soft fingers on his brow, fingers that pulsed and throbbed. And as the speaking fingers did their work he felt himself suddenly awakened from a long sleep and to every throb that came from the woman's fingers he responded with a throb—an eager, savage throb.

He opened his eyes to meet hers. Her lips were close. With a quick turn of his arm he snatched her close to him and bound her mouth against his until she struggled to be free.

"When?" he said hoarsely as she lifted her face.

"Tonight before the moon rises."

"Your husband?"

"Two glasses of gin and only the death angel's horn will waken him before midnight. In the dark of the moon—good-bye."

She laughed—that mocking, teasing laugh. She arose and took her way hurriedly across the sand.

Springing to his feet the man took an involuntary step after her. He was breathing hard. His eyes were feverish.

"Why should a man whose blood is warm within him sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster," he exclaimed. "In the swallowing grief of dark forgetfulness and deep oblivion, there's nothing good or bad but thinking makes it so. Until after the dark of the moon—no *thinking!*"

When his companions who had early retired were asleep, Gene Bertner stole from the tent across the sand. It was not necessary to go to the shelter of the rock for all

the world lay in darkness now. Never had there been a blacker night—welcome black—a safe cloak.

Throwing himself down where he knew the path of the woman would cross his, he waited. The sand was warm and soft and comfortable. The night was still, the palm trees as quiet as a flock of green-plumed creatures gone to roost.

But while the man waited a breeze stirred. Soon the palm leaves were strumming under the motion of a sharp wind that came in from the sea and the waves that had been splashing gently against the rock began to slap with vigor as if suddenly angered.

It came quick. In the blackness not an outline could be seen. But the whistling of the palm leaves and the crashing of the water on the rock told the nature of the storm.

The storm itself was perhaps not different from many another sea sirocco. But the struggle, the fierce fury of the battle raging around the rock was so like the fury battling within his own being, the man was fascinated.

Against the immovable foundations of the red- and black-footed rock the waves were pounding—beating, as if to wrench from the deep abdominal recesses some prey. Coarse, sonorous, deep mouthed as the death bells of Hades was the voice of the pounding waves driving hard and leaping over themselves in wild, unbridled desire. And while the heavy, measured thunder at its base was taking place, around the jutting point the wind whistled in wreaths of wild and furious melody that hinted of delicious insensibility while it stirred desire.

With a sensation of exhilaration the man listened to the infernal pounding sub-tones and the circling shrieks above.

It was not born of reason—this wild ecstatic sensation. It was not love for he was unmoved by any sacred sentiment. Not from his head nor from his heart came his desire but rather from his loins and the satanic sub-beating and the

shrieking, mocking echoes made by the element of Nature were to him the breaking of bounds—bounds of a long repressed animal nature! It was the siren call of sex.

A flying cocoanut grazing his head brought him to a sense of the fury of the storm. He sprang up and turned his face to his tent. But the wind was coming from every direction as it seemed and he heard something rushing toward him like a monster in the dark. It caught him in long tentacles which were writhing and quivering and bore him with whirlwind velocity so near the edge of the foaming waters they beat him in the face.

Freeing himself by a master effort from the top of the palm tree which had entangled him, he again tried to rise. This time from the rear he was knocked to the earth by a boiling wave.

Flat on his face he dug his fingers into the sand in an effort to stop his body. But the finger holes filled with water and the shifting sand slipped away. Finally succeeding in getting on his hands and knees he made another effort to reach dry sand but was again struck down. And so between wind and wave he was buffeted until the breath was all but beaten from his body.

Then there came a lull in the fury of the storm which seemed to lessen its hold of him as a cat lessens its hold on a mouse that it may take breath for further ineffectual struggle.

As he lay exhausted the satanic sub-tones of the boiling waves thundering against the foot of the rock and its compliment, the siren shrieking of the wind around the point, seemed driving some message through him from his loins to his brain. But it was no longer the call of unbridled desire.

The elemental forces seemed to have taken the passion that was his and made of it a projector to record upon him with multiplied fury. He felt this. But the full measure

of its meaning came with words—words appalling in their unheard of and diabolical mockery for they were his own words being shrieked, shouted, thundered, driven back into himself—"God blast me if I am not true to you!"

The storm still allowed him bodily freedom. With a cry of terror he raised himself onto his knees and lifted his hands and face as if in prayer.

As he did so he felt himself growing cold—clammy. The beating of his heart was removed to some infinite distance. All the blackness of the breath of a storm that seemed to him hatched in Hades and blown by monsoons from hell, was around him. He could see nothing. But in that moment he heard the Voice—heard it as if it had come from some great depth of calm like that lying fathoms below the red and black base rock in the sea. Infinite in their meaning of weal or woe were the two words uttered by the Voice. "Forever and forever."

As he heard the words he felt the passing of the Spirit.

He was rising from his knees and straining his eyes to catch a glimpse of the etheric form, when something struck him in the head. He had a momentary impression that something warm bathed his forehead. He fell upon the sand unconscious.

* * * * *

The storm had some hours passed when Gene Bertner became again conscious of his existence. The dark of the night and the storm had given place to the light of a new day. The waves that had raced madly in toward the palm grove had retired within their wonted bounds. The sands, clean washed except for fragments of palm leaves whipped from their tree-top holdings, stretched trackless and inviting.

When he first opened his eyes the man Bertner was not sure he was awake for he could see nothing.

Then he became aware that there was something over his eyes. He raised his hands. But scarce had his fingers come in contact with some kind of cloth over his eyes than he felt a touch against his hand, fingers closing around it and lifting it away.

"Don't take it off. You may start the blood running again. And we are not fixed here for such things."

The man's reply to this order was a violent jerking away of the bandage.

His uncovered eyes met those of the woman he had gone upon the sand to meet—those narrow—teasing—meaning eyes.

From the cot on which he found himself lying, he sprung up.

"Don't move around!" the woman exclaimed, "You're likely to faint again. You were struck in the head by a five foot palm leaf driving like an arrow. If its broken stem, knife-sharp, had struck you full force, your head would have been split. But the side stroke only knocked you out for a time. At first I thought you were dead. Thank God you are not. The man—that man you called my husband, went out in a small boat before the storm. It was washed in this morning, bottom up. So now my tent can be your tent."

Gene Bertner who had turned half away from the woman, faced about, his eyes meeting hers.

"You do not speak. But you will stay—stay and I will be your inspiration to write the book—the story of your love—your white lilacs."

With the words of the woman the man she addressed felt a flame flash over him that seared and burned. It passed as quickly as it had come giving place to stolid indifference.

It was the eye of a dead man the woman's eye now met. Nor all her wiles of voice or scent or touch of sex could

resurrect him. Instinctively she knew this even before, without a word, he turned his back on her, his face to the open sea.

Across the clean sand he made his way. Upon its rim he stood his eyes searching its far horizon where a speck showed against the sky.

As the speck took the form of a sail, the man who had been dead to the woman grew intensely alive in his watch of the ship.

It was coming in. It must be Curry Chicken.

Before night he would be sailing with his back to the farther East.

CHAPTER XXVI

"A MIRACLE!"

IN THE days following the tragic downfall of the dream of Maximilian in Mexico, there was a chaotic condition of society. Suspicion lurked everywhere, few men trusting their fellow men and every man in a more or less expectant state with his intuitive sense of self preservation alert.

Generally, however, priests of the dominating Roman Catholic Church were safe and cases were not unknown where the garb of some holy order was assumed as a cloak of protection.

In one case at least the priestly garb was worn by an impostor whose sin was revealed to the man himself in a manner that struck into the heart of his conscience as a keen blade strikes into flesh.

From the heat of the day the man in holy garb had entered a dingy little chapel and was stopping in the shade after the outside glare, when the quiet of his rest was sharply broken.

"Holy father! My sin is burning my soul!"

With the words he felt the touch of hands on the skirt of his garment and turning he beheld a prostrate form and the terror-stricken face of a man looked up to him.

"Holy father! Hear my confession and in the name of the Blessed Mother of God speak forgiveness! My soul is in the flames! I killed him—*killed* him! His blood ran red! Jesus! It has colored the world red—my hands are red—my soul is red! At night I can't sleep for his eyes are looking at me and by day I cannot get away from them. Penance! Speak the punishment that will wipe out the stain. Forgiveness! Holy Father!"

The face was pitiful in its appeal. The voice was beseeching. The hands were trembling.

For a moment the man in priestly attire stood dumb. Then he said, "Would to God I were such as you think I am. But I have no power of forgiveness. I too have sinned and seek to make confession."

The effect of the penitent's appeal on the man in the chapel was to drive him to a confession.

He was not in the garb of a priest, however, when in another part of the town at the twilight of the same day, he entered a church of high arches and many grottoes.

Here, when his eyes had become accustomed to the gloom, he saw a priest kneeling before an image in its grotto.

As the penitent had done with him, so he threw himself beside the priest urgently requesting that he be heard.

Rising the priest spoke reminding him that none but a full and honest confession can bring forgiveness.

Two sins the penitent confessed.

The first was wearing the garb of holy orders as a safeguard against the recognition of a criminal.

"From the humblest priest to His Holiness the Pope, it is fully known that the church can never be made the cloak of crime, the safe refuge of criminals. Have you heard of the case of John Surratt?"

"John Surratt!" the words were uttered in surprise with the words quickly and quietly added, "No—I never heard of him."

"It was charged he was implicated in the assassination of President Lincoln of the United States with the murderer John Wilkes Booth. Surratt made his escape and two years later was found to be a member of the Swiss Guards of His Holiness in Rome. Though there was no extradition treaty requiring it, so soon as the discovery was made, His Holiness informed the United States government of the criminal's

whereabouts. I mention this because it is fresh in my mind, as an example of the attitude of our Holy Church. You have indeed committed a grievous sin in wearing the robe of a priest of the church."

"But this is not my greatest sin. I killed a man."

"Your hands are red with blood of a fellow being? Why did you commit this mortal sin? Had this man wronged your sister?"

"No, father."

"Or enticed your wife?"

"No, father."

"Had he robbed you?"

"No, father."

"Had he, the murdered man, shed blood—the innocent blood of helpless ones looking to you for protection?"

After a moment of silence the kneeling man said "I thought—thought—he shed innocent blood—lots of it."

"Your hesitating lips show that there is uncertainty. Search your heart well. Did he, this man whose blood is on your hand, *wilfully shed innocent blood?*"

Before his tongue had shapen an answer the kneeling man felt a peculiar and paralyzing chill come suddenly upon him. His heart seemed beating outside and beyond his body, and his eyes without his own volition were turned toward the grotto.

There it stood, the spirit of Abraham Lincoln. Well he knew it because of two previous appearances. But neither time before had the lines of the face been so clearly drawn and not before had the eyes met his with so steady an expression of recognition. They seemed to look into him—some far recess that might exist but with which he was not familiar.

Though penetrating to the core, the deep set eyes were kindly—with a pleading kindliness that seemed to draw him.

The determination that had come to the man while hearing of the Yoghi who touched the phantom tree, to touch the ghost should it ever appear to him again, had not been forgotten. With a sudden movement the penitent at the feet of the priest threw his arms into the grotto—reaching, feeling in the shadows until his eager fingers came in contact with something.

But it was not etheric—not substantless.

It was hard, unyielding and little less cold than the chill that had come upon him.

He lifted his eyes again.

Instead of the deep-eyed, sorrow haunted but kindly face of the spirit, it was the face of the Compassionate Christ which looked at him from the gloom.

"Jesus—son of Mary!" the man exclaimed, his fingers dropping from the hem of the garment they had touched.

The priest was beside him.

"Did you see something—something more than the image of the Blessed Son of Mary?"

"Yes, holy father. Standing for a moment in front of the statue so that it was hidden as behind a bar of mist, I saw it."

"A spirit?"

"A spirit."

"Did you recognize it?"

"Yes, holy father."

"Was it the ghost of the man you killed?"

There was hesitation and a question in the mind of the penitent.

Had the priest seen?

"For him who conceals there can be no forgiveness. The Holy Mother is your witness—was it the ghost of the man you murdered?"

"Yes, father."

"A miracle! A miracle!" the priest exclaimed. "Three times has it happened. Three times has a confessed murderer seen the spirit of his victim in this sacred place where those only come who come in the peace of forgiveness. A sign it is that when your last penance has been paid, the forgiveness of God awaits you as you have already been forgiven by the victim of your soul-damning crime."

With the priest's parting words in his ears, words half blessing and half warning, the murderer who had seen the ghost left the church and another day later he had left the town.

CHAPTER XXVII

"EVEN AS THE BULL"

In a Mexican city famous alike for its cathedral and its bull fights, there stood on the church steps one Sunday morning a handsome man in correct American dress. His hat was a rather wide-brimmed Stetson. He slowly twirled a small cane in his right hand, the handle of which passed over his thumb which, if one had looked carefully, would have been seen turned under. He was dark eyed and wore a moustache the ends of which he once or twice smoothed down.

This gentleman who had come to mass found many others passing up the steps and through the high arched entries.

Waiting, aside, he noticed three ladies passing. Two were old and garbed in black.

Between them walked Youth in all its joyful symbolism —a maiden.

As the three, walking slowly because of the age of one of them, passed the American, the young woman turned her eyes to meet his.

She smiled and passed on between her black-robed elders. Close behind followed the American gentleman. From the back all he could see was lace, cob-webby lace thick with roses, draped over the young woman's head.

But his one front glance had been enough to impress him with eyes catching the sun and throwing it back, dimples like tiny suck holes of Venus, and teeth—such gleaming teeth! And somewhere there had been red on her garment —a sash perhaps.

When the three women who had preceded him in, came out, the handsome American was standing near a font of

Holy water. As he expected, the slow moving elderly women paused here.

The girl, her eyes on the American, had made the sign of the cross and was standing near him while her aged aunts still dipped shaking fingers into the bowl.

Again she smiled.

Then the old ruse was resorted to—a handkerchief dropped to the floor. The American gentleman with quick and easy grace rescued the bit of embroidery and presented it.

Again that radiant smile and with it a sprig of camelia. There was only one word with it—"Señor," but the smile said the rest.

Then the American Señor spoke to her in Spanish—perhaps not good. But she understood and her delight was told in her native tongue, soft, very soft, though her elders were deaf, and with it one smile following another.

After the exchange of a few words they both understood. On the next day they were to meet—entirely accidently—at a quiet little garden just beyond the cathedral.

The American gentleman stood aside politely as the two old ladies joined the girl.

"She's beautiful and therefore to be wooed," he said to himself. "She is a woman and therefore to be won."

As he turned from the cathedral he held the camelia to his nostrils.

"A new kind. Lilacs—sandal wood—and this," and he smiled.

Not in years had he felt so like the man he had once been.

Back at his hotel, where he had registered from Cuba, but had told the clerk he was looking after American oil interests, he chatted in so charming a manner the clerk took great liking to him and was not averse to telling a person who made inquiries four days later, what he knew of the hotel guest from Cuba.

The interested inquirer was none other than Don Juan Valento who had more dead bulls to his credit than any matador who ever cast a dart in a Mexican bull fight.

Monday following the Sunday the American gentleman had made the acquaintance of the Spanish beauty at the cathedral. Don Juan, disappointed at not finding his sweetheart Doña Luisa at home when he called, took a stroll to pass the time until she should return.

The fame of Don Juan as a matador had gone abroad. Admiration was his and applause, and great was his pride at the reputation his luck in the ring had brought him.

But the pride dwarfed into a sickly shadow of pleasurable sensation beside his love for the beautiful Doña Luisa and when he discovered her in the garden with a strange man his anger was like a flame.

By his eyes and hair, the man pouring a flow of speech into the ears of the entranced Doña, might have been an Italian. By his dress he was English or American.

Don Juan Valento would find out. Having found out the stopping place of the man he would find some way to impress him that wisdom lay in a separate course for him and the Spanish girl.

To this end though detained several days in a quest he would have immediately finished, he called at the different hotels in the city at which foreigners stopped.

It was at the last one visited that he found the man he was looking for and in a peculiar way. On the clerk's desk there lay an American newspaper with pictures of several men. One of these, a dark haired, dark eyed man drew the matador's attention before he had spoken to the clerk.

"Have you a guest—American or English," he asked the clerk, "who looks like this?" and he indicated the cut.

The clerk looked at it.

"There's an American from Cuba here looking after some oil interest who resembles it. But it's not the same man. This here is a picture of the fellow that murdered President Lincoln of the United States a few years ago. Don't you see his name, John Wilkes Booth? Somebody's got a story started that he was not killed as supposed in that barn. Did you read about it? We heard nothing else for a time. There were Americans in the hotel. They were crazy on the subject."

"The gentleman from Cuba is interested in oil you have said. Señor Oila looks like this man."

While Don Juan was planning to locate the handsome American, Doña Luisa in the garden with him was describing a bull fight and urging him to be her guest at a fight the next Sunday when he would see Don Juan Valento, the famous matador, slay the wildest, fiercest big black bull yet turned loose in a Mexican ring.

The invitation was accepted with pleasure and on the next Sunday the American gentleman met his charming new acquaintance and with her went to the great ring which they found already crowded, though it was an hour before time for the thrilling spectacle.

The scene was one of gay colors and animation and there was plenty to observe.

For the American gentleman sitting beside Doña Luisa there was an incident of interest which was not a part of the moving shouting scene about him.

Three times before the matador entered the ring a flash of light momentarily blinded the eyes of the man the bull fighter called Señor Oila.

The first time he was puzzled but the Señorita told him it was somebody on the opposite side and below, throwing sunlight with a small mirror.

When it came a second time she said in her limpid

Latin tongue, "It is a sign. If it shall come three times, beware!"

"What is it a sign of?" was asked.

"If it comes a third time I will tell you."

When a third time the blinding light struck him in the eyes—the American asked for its meaning.

"It is a warning—a death sign. The matador is my lover. He is saying the American gentleman will be even as the bull because he is with Doña Luisa. He has never missed the point with a bull. But the keen blade would not be thrust in Señor Americana before a great multitude. The matador would not expect so big applause for killing a man," and she laughed merrily.

"And so the matador is your lover? And he would make me even as the bull? Interesting!"

There was an assumed air of indifference in the man's tone, but his eyes were ready to watch the matador closely. No telling what a hot blooded Castilian bull fighter might try to do.

With the first strains of the lively march which announced the opening of the arena gates and the coming of the cavalcade, all attention, even that of the American, was centered on the ring.

First, on decorated horses, rode officers. Following them, on foot, gorgeously clad in a blue satin short jacket richly embroidered with gold and silver, short breeches, colored silk stockings and black pumps, came Don Juan Valento.

His appearance was the signal for wild applause which continued as he bowed in turn to the President and to the spectators.

Behind Don Juan rode the *picadores,* the legs of their horses heavily armoured to protect them from the horns of the bulls.

While the bull fighters were getting in place Don Juan stood in front of the President's box quietly waiting his

time to meet the bull single handed. When all was ready the gate was flung open and with a bellow the bull rushed into the arena and straight toward the first *picador*.

A moment only and the horns of the animal had been driven deep into the flanks of the miserable horse.

Meantime, the *picador* on its back drove his lance into the bull's shoulder making a wound from which the blood flowed red over its dark hide.

Cloaks were now waved in the face of the enraged animal to draw his attention from the horse and its rider so they might be carried out.

A second *picador* and a third attacked the bull, in each attack the horses being killed. Once a *picador* himself was gored and carried out.

When the encounters with the *picadores* were over the *banderillero* came with his gaily decorated darts which must pass outside the bull's horns, in the throwing, and into its shoulders.

As the darts quivered in the bull's shoulders, one on each side wild applause rang out, the bull, meantime, tossing his head roaring piteously, all his fury gone.

But the sport had not yet ended. The bull had plenty of life left in him for the grand climax when it should be again stirred into action.

This was done by a second *banderillero* who shot two powder loaded darts into the bull.

As these went off in a series of explosions the bull revived. He bellowed with surprise and fury and rushing upon one of the dead horses began to gore it savagely. But his end was now in sight.

At a signal from the President, Don Juan stepped forward.

He was greeted with a roar of applause.

In his left hand he held a small red cloak and in his

right the thin sword with which he was to end the life of the enraged and bleeding bull.

Throwing the red over the blade he waved it in the face of the bull.

The maddened brute rushed at him. Swiftly he raised the sword and the red, and the bull passed by him. Back and forth three times Don Juan made the bull, bellowing with rage, dash after him.

Then with a motion quick and graceful as that of a cat he reached over the head of the beast between its blood tipped horns, and planted his sword in the vital spot in the middle of its neck.

There was a breathless silence. Don Juan held out his hand. The big bull sank slowly to its knees as if obeying the matador's command—then rolled over dead.

The audience burst into wild and continued applause. Don Juan Valento bowed to the President and acknowledged the applause of the crowd.

Then he pulled the sword from the neck of the dead bull and turning faced the direction of the handsome American. A moment his eyes searched. Then he saw his man. He lifted his keen blade from the point of which a few drops of thickening blood quivered. He gave it a quick forward motion and held it aloft.

Again the spectators cheered.

But the girl said to the man, "With closed lips he speaks to the man who sits beside Doña Luisa—he says—as I told you 'You too shall be even as the bull'," and the Spanish beauty laughed merrily.

That evening on his return to his hotel, the clerk said to the American gentleman, "You did not tell me the famous matador—Don Juan Valento is your friend."

"Was he inquiring for me?" the gentleman asked with no assumed interest.

"Yes. He was here. Not finding you he was pleased with a picture he said looked like you."

"A picture?"

"In an American newspaper."

"Where is it?"

"He took it with him."

"Who could look so much like me as to afford my friend Don Juan pleasure in possession of the picture?"

"It was the fellow who killed President Abraham Lincoln."

That same night the American gentleman checked out, telling the hotel clerk he was going back to Cuba.

CHAPTER XXVIII

JOHN ST. HELEN

In Texas on the Bosque River where it winds its way at the feet of the Bosque Mountains to the Brazos and to the sea, there is a picturesque village called Glen Rose.

In 1872 this frontier hamlet consisted of not more than three or four houses and an old log mill built where a crystal stream of water fell over the robust old wheel pushing it into activity for its useful service.

One day, into the only vacant building in the cluster of pioneer homes around the mill, there moved a man with a Mexican servant. Where he had come from there were none who knew and few who cared. He gave his name as John St. Helen and opened up a store with scarcely enough other stock than liquor to save it from being a common frontier saloon.

The owner of this establishment lived in the back of it and seemed to be a person of leisure for his servant not only did the work but most of the time sold the wet goods over the bar.

His apartment was comfortably furnished and neatly kept. His clothes were of good material, well made and stylish for the frontier of the West. At times he drank freely of his own liquid stock and all times when they could be obtained he read newspapers and magazines. He kept a pistol handy and with the exception of a surprise fight pulled off now and then though his place was popular with cowboys, it was orderly and for the most part quiet.

While John St. Helen was keeping store at Glen Rose, in the little town of Granberry, a few miles to the North and West, an ambitious young lawyer, scarce out of his

teens, by name Finis L. Bates, had hung out his shingle and was trying to establish himself in his profession.

The first important case that came to young Bates was one in which his client had been summoned into Federal Court to answer the charge of selling liquor and tobacco without a license.

An examination of his client by Mr. Bates brought out the fact that his client was charged with an offense committed while he was at Glen Rose in the building now occupied by a man named John St. Helen, and it was necessary, in order that Mr. Bates' client should be cleared, that this John St. Helen should appear in court as a witness.

To the end of achieving professional success in his first important case Mr. Bates went to Glen Rose to see the man St. Helen.

With a courtesy uncommon on the frontier, Mr. Bates was greeted by Mr. St. Helen. This courteous manner made its first impression.

Mr. Bates' second impression was that the eyes of St. Helen were not mates; and a third impression was that the man himself was a double.

The impression of mis-mated eyes, very dark eyes, passed with the early discovery that it was the eyebrows instead of the eyes that were not alike. The impression that the man was two men stayed with him and was emphasized by their first conversation.

After explaining his mission, Mr. Bates told Mr. St. Helen he would be expected to appear as a witness for the lawyer's client.

"That I refuse to do, sir," was St. Helen's prompt reply.

"You refuse to appear in Federal Court?"

"I refuse, positively."

There was fire in the dark eyes and without meaning to do so Mr. Bates let his eyes fall for a moment on St. Helen's pistol.

"But don't you know there is a way to force a witness into Court?"

"Do you want to try force on me?" There was a challenge in the voice and eyes.

"Such is not my desire. My only purpose is to protect my client. If you were in his place and he in yours, it would be your interests I would be looking after."

John St. Helen was silent a moment, meantime, looking down as in a study and twisting the ends of an imperial black moustache.

"You are right," he said, the anger gone from his eyes. "He is no lawyer who does not look to his client's good. I have reasons for not appearing in Federal Court which were I to tell them, you would understand. I will not appear. But there can be a way by which you can take care of your client's interests. Give me a few days to think it over. I will come to your office with my plan."

On his way back to his home at Granberry the young lawyer tried to come to a definite opinion as to what kind of a man this new acquaintance was. His age was uncertain. He was neither young nor old—somewhere past thirty, Mr. Bates decided. But his age was not the problem. Who was the man? This was the question.

Whoever he was, the lawyer had found him unusually interesting in the few moments he had seen him and looked forward to his next meeting, never doubting that the man would come to his office as agreed.

Nor was he disappointed. A few days later John St. Helen arrived in Granberry and was welcomed by the lawyer.

When they were alone in the office John St. Helen placed a dark red morocco wallet on the table in front of Mr. Bates.

"Here is money," he said. "Take what you need to pay your own and your client's expenses to Tyler; pay his fine

and take out your fee. After court I will call again and get the wallet."

How much money was in the wallet Mr. Bates did not know but after all expenses had been paid there seemed to remain in the purse as many bills as before.

A second time the young lawyer waited for John St. Helen with even more interest than he had waited the first time.

The second visit with St. Helen proved to Mr. Bates one of the most interesting of his life though it left him with an unsolved problem for years.

After receiving his wallet Mr. St. Helen said, "I now wish to retain you for my attorney and as my legal counsellor, wish to tell you that I am what the poet might call 'a huge translation of hypocrisy'. I have another name than the one you know me by. I have not always been here. Where I came from it would be hard for any man to tell. Why I came is my own affair. If, while I am near you, approaching death should make necessary the unveiling of my concealed identity, it is to you my legal counsel and I hope my friend, the secret will be told. For any legal service your fees will be promptly paid. For friendship, friendship will be returned you in full measure. I am older than you by a pressed-full and running-over measure of bitter years. But you measure up big as a man and seem to be my kind. Am I correct in thinking you are a Southerner?"

"A Mississippian."

A smile lit the face of John St. Helen as he said, "I thought it."

After this second visit of his new and strange client, Mr. Bates found himself wondering what the mystery was that he might someday know at the same time hoping the knowledge would not come soon if it was to be divulged only at the death of John St. Helen to whom he felt strongly

drawn. Perhaps St. Helen's seeming appreciation of his ability and ambition entered into the attraction the older man had for the young lawyer.

At any rate a firm friendship grew of the acquaintance and the two men spent many happy hours together. Sometimes their visits were at Glen Rose where Bates visited St. Helen and sometimes the latter was the guest of the lawyer at Granberry.

As months passed, the mystery always a matter of speculation with Finis Bates, grew no less, nor was he rid of his first impression that John St. Helen was, if not two men, a combination man for never had he known there existed one character at the same time so tender and in some ways so hard; so courteous and yet so quick to lose his temper; so refined and so silvery tongued, for the lawyer had never sat under the spell of a voice of such charm, and yet so secluded. Full of life that seemed restive for joyous expression, he was at times despondent, deeply melancholy, and always there was a restless nervousness about him as if he were expecting something to come or happen.

In his talk he used freely quotations from Shakespeare and other poets and this with his knowledge of the stage and his pronunciation of certain words pertaining to stage craft, especially the word the-a-tre, which he always pronounced with an accented long "a", gave rise to the suggestion that he had been an actor.

But no questions were ever asked by Mr. Bates nor did he attempt any sleuth work.

Sometimes John St. Helen seemed to the young lawyer an embodiment of Fatalism. Yet by his words the man himself denied this as when one day after a discussion of self government he exclaimed with fine fervor, " 'Virtue? A fig! 'Tis ourselves that we are thus, or thus. Our bodies are our gardens to the which our wills are gardeners so that as we will, we plant nettles or sow lettuce; set hyssop

and weed up thyme; supply it with one gender of herbs or distract it with many; either to have it sterile with idleness or manured with industry; why, the power and corrigible authority of this lies in our own wills!' ''

It was noticeable that, though John St. Helen was friendly with everybody, he had, with the exception of one family, no intimate friends.

This exception was the family of William McDonald, a man of Scotch-Irish parentage who had come to Texas from Alabama. On Squaw Creek, four miles north of Glen Rose, he had built an extra good log house and tightly plastered all cracks through which light might show at night to draw marauding Indians.

Among the sons and daughters of William McDonald and his wife Mary Collens, were a couple of grown boys named Jack and Dave, who shared their bed with John St. Helen when he was at their home. There was a young lady daughter who introduced St. Helen to the few young people of the sparsely settled community when they met at dances and frolics which he sometimes attended and where he was always popular.

But of the members of the family the one John St. Helen was most interested in was a little girl of a dozen years named Sadie. A bright and attractive child was Sadie McDonald and St. Helen, himself a dramatic reader of charm and force, taught the little girl of the far West how to give dramatic readings so that she came to be unusually accomplished in this art.

And because of his fondness for the child and in appreciation of her talent and efforts to develop it, the strange man, ardently admired by the child, bought her, as often as he went to Cleburne or Dallas, some kind of a gift.

Often on Saturdays, when John St. Helen was at the McDonald home for over Sunday, he would watch Sadie at her regular Saturday task of moulding candles and while

her quick, small hands were busy, he told her stories from the plays of Shakespeare.

In addition to the young lawyer, Finis Bates, and the little girl, Sadie McDonald, John St. Helen had another friend—a friend impersonal and yet to him possessed of a multiple personality.

This was the waters of the Bosque where they fell over the shelf in the river's bed onto the old mill wheel.

From somewhere the waters came. Somewhere they went. From somewhere he had come—to somewhere he was on the way. The man never required the river to give an account of its course nor did the waters ever demand of the man a story of his past.

But if the river did not tell its past, it seemed forever trying to tell something and that something was not unpleasant.

At night as the man lay on his bed in his cabin home, the music of falling water rested him when sleep refused to come. At such times it seemed there was the spirit of a mother in the water though he never heard his own mother's voice or words.

Nor was it always at night the water was like a companion. Often times by day it seemed trying to speak with him, but in a language he could not understand, more than that it was friendly.

Where the waters pushed hardest to bound over the edge, it flattened into a sheet which made a mirror framed in rainbow spray.

Once in this opal-tinted mirror, the man caught a glimpse of a beautiful woman with branches of white lilacs all about her. This day he understood the language of the water as it went running and rushing and sparkling on to the sea saying, "Forever and forever." Only a glimpse it was. Then the rainbow spray blotted it out but the words lived on.

And another time he understood. This time it was not a woman and white lilacs he saw. It was the pale reflection of a man's ghost. For a moment St. Helen thought it was the Ghost in reality. This was, however, but an impression as he immediately knew for there was not with this vision the phenomena of the bodily chill and remoteness from the physical that he had experienced in his vital though few meetings with the Ghost. For a passing moment on the flat face of the falling water it stood—this reflection of the Ghost. Then, as though moving on a ray of light it was gone, the green of trees, the blue of sky mingling in many colored patches where it had been.

This day too the man understood the language of the water seeking to find the sea. Like an echo the familiar words sounded over and over, "Charity for all."

CHAPTER XXIX

ST. HELEN LEAVES GLEN ROSE

It was after he had seen this reflection of the Ghost and heard the echoed words of the Voice, that John St. Helen brought up with Finis Bates the subject of ghosts. It was a day when they had been discussing Shakespeare, as they often did, and the witches of Macbeth was the special subject.

"Shakespeare is immortal—his knowledge of human nature and his art of expression makes him so," Mr. Bates said, "but when he represents witches as having knowledge of future events and possessing ability to give accurate descriptions of what is to occur, he is getting too far into the unreal for me."

"Perhaps you do not believe Shakespeare's ghosts are real either?"

"Real ghosts?" and Finis Bates laughed.

"But you believe the Bible. It is full of ghost stories."

"I do not recall Biblical stories of ghosts."

"Call them spirits then—or spooks. Whatever name you choose the Bible is replete with them—could not be the Bible without them. Over and over these white apparitions appeared from Abraham to the Virgin Mary, while dreams and warnings make both purposes and climaxes and even witches are accredited. I knew a man once—combination Bible student and spiritualist. He told me a lot on this subject."

"But you must remember, my dear John, the Bible is an *inspired* book."

"For me Shakespeare has been inspired and if I am not mistaken, I have heard you say its study is an inspiration to you."

"I have said it. I mean it. But the inspiration of the Bible is different. If it is granted that Shakespeare's ghosts and spirits are genuine, as are those of the Bible, can you not see that the way would be open for an acceptance of spiritualism? And what is more fraudulent, more damaging to religion than spiritualism?"

"You deny the reality of spirits because you do not want to believe in spiritualism. Odd kind of argument for a legal mind and not convincing, for I believe in ghosts —*real* ghosts and I am not what is called a spiritualist."

"You? You believe in ghosts?" There was surprise and perhaps disappointment in the question. "How can you?"

"Because I must. Doubt is impossible. Let me tell you what a man told me—a man I knew as well as I know myself. This man, as men have been doing since the days of Cain, killed a man. I can not give you his story in detail as I know it, for the man was vitally impressed with the ghost, but briefly it was this; early a few mornings after he had committed his crime, he woke up in a thicket where he was hiding, to find himself face to face with the spirit of the man he had killed. Frightened until he felt eternally paralyzed he could only stare. Not only did he see with his eyes but he heard with his ears, a voice, not that of the man, but a voice sounding, from God only knew where, and speaking familiar words used by the dead man as the man who saw the ghost had heard them.

"A second time this man saw the spirit. On top of a lonely mountain between earth and sky it appeared again —and again the voice spoke the familiar words. He did not *think,* he *saw*; he did not *think,* he *heard*—this man to whom the ghost appeared. He *knew.* For a time he traveled over far seas to far lands and though he did not see the spirit, its presence was often-times nearer to him than his own heart beating and breath drawing.

"Then a third time the spirit showed itself in its substantless body. Far from the land of his birth the man had gone into a place of prayer to make a confession. Here, in a grotto occupied by an image, he saw for a third time the spirit."

"Was he a drinking man?" Mr. Bates asked when St. Helen had finished his recital.

"He drank some—everybody does. But the soberest moments of his life were those when he saw that ghost."

"The effect of meeting the ghost of a murderer's victim, even though imaginary, would have a sobering effect on the average man—especially the criminal."

"What about the voice he heard?"

"That he thought he heard a voice proves to my mind that if he wasn't drunk he was crazy. It's common enough for folks out of their heads to see things, but to see and hear both at the same time—that's stuff no sane man can swallow."

"I've swallowed it. I believe the man saw the spirit and heard the voice—believe because I knew the man."

"Bad sign. You'll be seeing things yourself next," and Finis Bates laughed. But there was sincerity in his voice when he added, "You've not been so well lately, John. What do you want to live here alone for? Why not come to Granberry where you'll be close to a friend when you get lonesome and your mind goes ghost-gathering? Or—you might get sick."

"There's nothing the matter with me except the damn asthma that gives me the rattles at times, and a touch of kidney trouble. All the men of my family had it."

"Your family?"

"Yes. I never told you about my family, did I? I will some day. The men all made good use of their throats—not preachers either. I wanted to follow in the family line,

but my throat—it made a different life necessary. That's one reason I'm here. No good anywhere else."

"Think it over—moving to my town. It will be better for both of us."

Mr. Bates' suggestion that St. Helen move to Granberry was not acted on at once. But a few weeks later an incident occurred which prompted the advised change.

About a mile from the home of William McDonald a family had recently built a log cabin, barn and corral for the horses.

Indians had been raiding the homes of settlers farther to the south and west and men of the Glen Rose locality were not unprepared when news reached them that Indians had attacked the new neighbors of the McDonalds.

John St. Helen was at the McDonald home when a fast rider brought the news. Almost before the words were out of his mouth, William McDonald and two of his sons were on their horses and away.

Greatly excited, Sadie McDonald begged John St. Helen to follow her father and brothers taking her.

Unable to ride at the cowboy speed of those who had gone before him and thinking there would be little danger for the child in following, St. Helen acceded to her entreaties and with her holding on behind him, for there was but one horse left for the two, they hurried to the scene of excitement.

A lurid spot against the sky, as St. Helen and Sadie McDonald neared the place of attack, told the fate of the cabin. When they reached the place they found the flames beyond control and but a few men around the house, the greater number having gone in pursuit of the Indians who had stolen the horses as well as fired the building.

Dismounting, the man and the child drew as near the fire as was comfortable, to watch, with the fascination it always arouses, the work of destroying flames.

Just as the two stopped beside the burning cabin, a horse dashed across their pathway, on which the figure of an Indian crouching low against the neck of the galloping steed was seen in the red light and as it passed the sharp report of a gun shot was heard. But the concealed Indian had made his escape and there were no spare men to pursue him.

Following the dash of the horse, as it seemed to St. Helen at the same moment, a heavy timber that had supported the roof of the building, fell into the glowing bed and with its falling, as a shower of sparks lifted itself against the dark sky, he heard words.

"Sic semper tyrannis!"

With such diabolical mocking as he had never but once before heard, the words—his own—were shouted into his innermost ear.

Before, when he had been mocked by the words, "God blast me if I am not true to you," his own conduct might have induced them and they were uttered in a frightful storm.

But here there was no storm and nothing to suggest the time or place of the words unless by some subtle association of ideas the dashing horseman had stirred them from their place of deserted memory.

A second time in piercing mockery they smote the ear that will power cannot close, *"Sic semper tyrannis!"*

If the words had come in any ordinary way—like an echo or a memory, the effect might not have been the same.

But to hear himself—the half-feared, half-pitied himself of passed years, shrieking to himself was uncanny—cunningly, devilishly uncanny and in spite of the heat he felt there was cold moisture on his face.

The log had sunk into the bed of fire and flames were wrapping it.

His eyes on the fire, the words yet sounding, John St. Helen felt his hand, which the child had been holding, suddenly dropped as if it had stung her.

Then above the crackling of the log in the flames he heard her scream as she stepped away from him—"Mr. St. Helen! You look like—look like—"

She paused, her terror-stricken face turned toward him.

"Who do I look like," he asked after waiting a moment to get his voice under control.

The child did not answer.

A few months before a circuit rider had preached in the community on the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," his text selected no doubt because of the popularity in this section of Texas, of shooting affairs.

With fine physical fervor and all the lurid words at his command this exhorter had pictured hell, the future abode of all murderers. His portrayal of the Imperial King of the fiery domain was minute, even to baked skin on roasted cheek bones and indestructible hair.

Sadie McDonald had heard this fearful decree of punishment and warning to evil doers and while devoutly thankful that she had never killed any man her face told how terror stricken she was at the bare thought of possible future sins.

It was the terror that had come into the child's face at meeting that marked it again as St. Helen waited for an answer to his question.

"Who do I look like?" he repeated.

Drawing yet a step farther back, her eyes on his face, she said, "You look like—look like the devil in his hell!"

A moment the man and the child stood, each looking into the fire-lit face of the other.

Then moving a step nearer him she said, a tone of hope in her voice, "You're not in it! You're not in the fire! It's not burning you! Don't look like it!"

"Of course I'm not in the fire. Neither are you. I was afraid when the burning log fell it would hit you. Did I look terribly frightened?"

"Worse."

"It is the red light on the fire shining on my face. Yours looks like it too."

He held out his hand. She stepped beside him and put hers in it.

Several times, though he did not let her know he was aware of it, St. Helen knew the little girl was studying his face.

Before they left the bed of embers, by the pressure of her hand against his he knew the child's disturbed confidence in him was re-established.

Back at McDonald's, John St. Helen remained with Mrs. McDonald and the children until the men returned.

For him he knew there would be no rest that night and with a last look at Sadie McDonald who had dropped asleep with her clothes on, he turned his face toward Glen Rose.

"What did she see in my face?" He asked himself as he went his solitary way.

"What might she sometimes see or hear? Sooner than have her know I would lose my right arm. I will see her no more. May her memory of me be that of the man she thinks me."

A few days later the store of John St. Helen at Glen Rose was empty.

He had gone to Granberry.

CHAPTER XXX

A STRANGE TALE

In Granberry, the coming of the mail was an event of interest to both Bates and St. Helen and together they discussed matters of mutual interest as reported in the newspapers which reached them.

Returning one day to his office with a fresh newspaper, Finis Bates found St. Helen waiting for him.

"John," he said throwing his hat on a chair and taking a folded paper from his pocket, "here's a chance to get rich. Listen.

" 'Fourth Grand Gift Concert for the benefit of the Public Library of Kentucky. 12,000 cash gifts, $1,500,000. Every fifth ticket draws a gift. $250,000 for $50. Authorized by special act of the legislature for the benefit of the library. Will take place December 3, 1873.' "

"What are you getting it out of?"

"*The Arkansas Gazette.* Read for yourself," and he handed the paper to St. Helen.

Before he read the alluring advertisement, however, something caught the eye of St. Helen that drew his instant attention.

"What is it?" Bates asked, noticing the keen interest of his companion.

"Its title is 'A Strange Tale'. It is about John Wilkes Booth and the question is asked, 'Is he still alive?' "

"Booth? The assassin of President Lincoln?"

"It must be. I have not read it yet, however."

"But Booth was shot in the Garrett barn and his body sunk in the Potomac River."

"So I have heard. But this looks interesting even though it is no more than a newspaper fable."

"Read it."

After a momentary pause St. Helen read.

" 'The *St. Louis Republican* relates how a reporter of that paper fell in with a Mr. Henry Maury who saw a man that saw John Wilkes Booth a year or two ago. The story is a strange one and by those who have been accustomed to look upon Booth as among the dead will be read with considerable incredulity.

" 'My name,' said the narrator, 'is Carroll Jackson Donelson and I am a blood relative of Andrew Jackson Donelson who died recently in Memphis, Tennessee (at the Peabody Hotel) for which city I am now enroute to assist in the settlement of his estate. During the war between the sections I was a captain in the Eighth Texas cavalry known as Terry's rangers and was at Terry's side when he fell on the banks of Green River in a charge upon Willich's Germans. At the close of the struggle I returned again to the sea and from San Francisco I shipped on board the ship Kate Hooper as first mate having on board as passengers thirty Chinese women bound for Shanghai. Reaching Singapore we took a cargo of mahogany, sandalwood, rattan and sugar. It was in the month of September when we sailed from Singapore in the Strait of Malacca, south to Borneo and rounded the Malacca isles avoiding the monsoons and passing on the side of the Pelew Islands, a small group north of the equator and near the tenth parallel. At the southwestern point of Pelew we were totally becalmed and saw a dismantled vessel near one of the group of islands.

" 'Manning a boat of ten men I pulled to her and found that it was the bark Dido of Hamburg: she had been deserted by her crew but her decks were covered and her hold filled with naked natives of a copper color, slender and sinewy, wearing their hair tied up on top of their heads. They were slowly removing the cargo of the vessel through

a hole they had cut in the side not having the genius to devise and rig a purchase to lift from the hold through the hatchway. On our arrival the natives fled from the vessel but before they left our carpenter killed one of them with an ax. We conjectured that the crew of the Dido had escaped in boats to a small Dutch settlement on one of the Gilolo Islands, it being about three days' run from Pelew to these islands.

" 'It was early in the morning that we first saw the Pelew Islands. We were bearing east-nor'-east eleven miles and gradually drifted to within four or five miles of them. On our beam lay the largest of the group forming a bight and covered with a dense vegetation, while the smaller ones with the exception of one or two to the north were entirely devoid of vegetable life and resembled low hills of arid sand. On the extreme south the islands were the same, forming a half circle or bight. We had with us a seaman named Curry Chicken, who had fished and coasted among these islands for years. Putting a couple of casks on board as we were short of water and making an entry of our discovery upon the log of the ship, we pulled in for the island and headed for a small bay about two points to our starboard bow, the water being as smooth as glass and clear as crystal. The bottom which was plainly visible resembling black and red coral. When one mile and a half from shore we laid on our oars as the natives were too numerous for us to venture among them without a parley. As they gathered around us in their canoes, Curry Chicken talked with them and learned that white men were on the island. Slowly we made our way up a cove that presented itself, and soon ran afoul of a lurcher, a vessel one-half European and the other half junk-model and rigged Chinese.

" 'Leaving a guard with the boat, we took the casks and skirted along the shore of the cove in search of the encampment of the owners of the lurcher and ahead of us about three hundred yards we discovered two tents peeping out among the foliage. Knowing from the natives that the

occupants of the tents were white men, we pushed boldly forward and came upon the encampment unawares.

"'Five men and one woman made their appearance from and around the tents. The first one that advanced toward me and extended his hand was J. Wilkes Booth. There was no mistake as to his identity as I had been an intimate friend of his in Montgomery, Ala., years before. He directed my men where water could be found and then entered into a confidential conversation with me asking that I should not reveal his name to my men or to anyone for a period of one year. "Besides," he said, "the world would not believe you if you were to say that J. Wilkes Booth lives. I have lost my identity among living men. A great government has killed me, buried me, paid its reward and I live a new and original existence."

"'His conversation with me was long and earnest, he stating that but one person in his party knew that he was Booth and that was the female who accompanied him. "And she," he said, "is my wife." ' "

When he had read this paragraph—St. Helen stopped and, in such a sudden burst of anger as Bates had not before seen him give way to, he exclaimed with flashing eyes, "The damn lie—the infernal liar!"

"What's the matter? What's a damn lie?" Bates asked.

"That Booth was on that island with a female—a wife."

"Of course it's a lie. Booth wasn't on the island. Booth was already dead and on the bottom of the Potomac river. "But why such undue emphasis on the lie?"

"Booth had no wife."

"How do you know?"

"Nobody ever heard of her."

"Maybe he had the kind of wife he didn't want anybody to hear of."

"What kind of a man do you think Booth was?"

"A murderer."

"And because he killed a man does it prove he was guilty of everything else?"

"Sins, like birds, flock together."

The face of St. Helen was ashy white and his eyes still flamed as he said, "Too bad a dead man cannot defend his character."

"Booth's character? Why defend it? Go on with your story."

After the moment required to steady himself into reading quiet, St. Helen continued.

" 'I did not reveal the secret of having met him until the expiration of the year and when it was told it gained no credence and was treated after the trivial fiction of a seafaring man. After the event on the Pelew islands, while on the coast of New Guinea, I learned from Americans that the lurcher described had been sighted on that coast. This was the last I heard of Booth.' "

St. Helen held the paper a moment after the last word had been spoken. Then, without a word he placed it across his knee.

"A strange story in truth," he observed.

"What do you make of it?" Bates asked.

"As a sailor's yarn it is not bad. But if it is intended for fact, I see no reason at this late date to undertake to prove that Booth is yet living."

"Since he's dead, he's dead to be sure. But stories like this are interesting and show there are people who hold to the opinion that the man who shot Lincoln is *not* dead, at least was not the man shot in the barn. Credulous people enjoy having their credulity stirred up now and then. Writers like this know it."

In thinking of their afternoon visit, Finis Bates wondered that night why John St. Helen's anger had gotten

the better of him at mention of the woman in the Booth story. Perhaps in his past there had been a woman—no doubt there had been. But what one or many women had to do with a Booth newspaper story, he could not imagine.

It was but a few weeks after the reading of the strange tale of Booth on a far sea island that the curiosity of Mr. Bates again stirred into mental questioning. This too came of a newspaper notice—a short one giving the information that the body of John Wilkes Booth had been delivered to the Booth family for interment in the Booth burying lot at Baltimore.

"Just a minute," exclaimed Bates to St. Helen who was reading. "My information has been that Booth's body was buried in the Potomac River. How in God's name could they get it up after all these years and deliver it for burial?"

"I cannot inform you, friend Finis. Let us consider the news item. Perhaps it will shed light on your question."

Continuing, the information given was that in the presence of several members of a troop practicing at Ford's Theatre in Washington who had been summoned across the road to the morgue, for the purpose of viewing the body of a once great actor, the body was unrolled from an old army blanket. When unwrapped the remains were found to be so badly decomposed the head fell away from it. Edwin Booth, waiting in the next room did not see the body which was identified by a dentist who examined a tooth he said he had filled. The body wore long riding boots such as John Wilkes Booth wore the night of the assassination.

"There's something strange about that tale too," Bates said after a moment's reflection, "unless my memory is defective. Didn't I read somewhere that Booth left one

of his boots at Dr. Mudd's and it was used as evidence against him?''

But St. Helen was more impressed by the manner in which the story said the skull of Booth parted from its body than with the boot puzzle.

'' 'Alas poor Yorick!' '' he exclaimed. '' 'This tongue is now a stringless instrument and dropped into the rotten mouth of death.' Well can Booth cry, 'My skull is empty! Where be your gibes now? Your gambols? Your flashes of merriment that were wont to set the table in a roar? Not one now to mock your own grinning, quite chap-fallen. Now get you to my lady's chamber and tell her; let her paint an inch thick. To this favor she must come—make her laugh at that.' ''

St. Helen paused. Bates had heard him quote Shakespeare before—but never as now.

Continuing St. Helen said, ''You do not believe in ghosts you say. But hear me, men do not die. Hamlet was not dead. The ghost that walked with noiseless tread and hollow eyes was more a man than were the filaments of flesh hung to his troubled bones. Ah Bates, 'but that I am forbid to tell the secrets of my prison-house, I could a tale unfold whose lightest word would harrow up thy soul, freeze thy young blood, make thy two eyes, like stars, start from their spheres, thy knotted and combined locks to part and each particular hair to stand on end, like quills upon the fretful porcupine.' ''

St. Helen's quotation, which had been delivered in an impressive manner, had its effects on Bates.

Seeing this effect St. Helen said, ''A few lines from Shakespeare. The skull of Booth rattling loose from his unfortunate body brings them to my mind—and the question of death—it comes also in words with which you are

not unfamiliar, 'Aye, but to die and go we know not where; to lie in cold obstruction and to rot; this sensible warm motion to become a kneaded clot, and the delighted spirit to bathe in fiery floods or to reside in thrilling regions of thick-ribbed ice; to be imprisoned in the viewless winds and blown with restless violence round about the pendent world'—uncertainty! Yet there is nothing more live than oblivion—more real than life."

It was some time after St. Helen left his office, before Bates recovered from the spell of the words that their speaker had cast over him.

"Man of mystery," he said. "If he is not an actor he should be."

CHAPTER XXXI

LIVING EVIDENCE

For five years the friendship of John St. Helen and Finis L. Bates existed in the quiet manner of a David and Jonathan bond, a man's friendship, evidencing none of the affectionate demonstration peculiar to feminine attachments, but none the less genuine.

During these years time had not been idle and each of the men bore evidence of the changes it had wrought.

For the younger man the passing days and months brought continual development of body and mind; brought friends and influence and financial promise.

It was not so with the older man. His body the hand of time had touched none too gently. The throat trouble of long standing was more troublesome. Headaches of such violence, that he found it necessary if he would rest, to resort to sleeping powders, came like storms. At times he was quite lame from rheumatism or some old hurt in his right leg. Some organic disease for which he found no remedy seemed preying upon him. Perhaps it was an affection of the heart for which there could be no remedy.

The reaction of his bodily ailments added to the melancholy which took possession of John St. Helen at times, a condition of mind Finis Bates found difficult to overcome.

Several times during the year St. Helen had been confined to his bed and Mr. Bates had watched with and cared for him.

But nothing was ever said about St. Helen's past until he became so critically ill his life was despaired of.

Mr. Bates had been with him but thinking him better had returned home.

When the change came, St. Helen realizing his condition, sent for Mr. Finis Bates with whom he asked to be left alone.

"He is almost gone," the doctor said when Mr. Bates arrived. "There seems to be something on his mind he would see you about."

"I am his lawyer as well as his friend," Mr. Bates answered quietly, though his heart was beating fast. St. Helen was dying! What would be his long withheld secret?

Entering the room he found his friend breathing hard. At first there was no light of recognition in his eye. When it came the man on the bed held out his hand. He drew his friend to his side and spoke.

"I am John Wilkes Booth," he spoke brokenly. "I killed Abraham Lincoln. Under the pillow there is a picture of me made at Glen Rose. Send it to my brother Edwin Booth in New York City—tell him—"

The words were not finished. The light was gone from the eyes.

Mr. Bates called the doctor and they waited, the eyes of the younger man fastened intently on the unconscious body as if unable to believe what he saw.

John Wilkes Booth! Assassin of Abraham Lincoln! His friend John St. Helen the man whose murderous act had made his name forever a stain upon the pages of his country's history!

It could not be. The confession had come of a vain imagination—a phantasm of a disordered mind. Disease had gone to the brain of the man.

The last breath which the bedside watchers waited for was not expended. Instead, the breathing grew stronger.

The eyes again opened. Consciousness had returned. The time was not yet come for the passing of John St. Helen.

While he was confined to his room no reference was made by St. Helen to Mr. Bates of his confession. But the first day he was able to be out, he asked his friend Bates to walk with him and together the two men took their way to a quiet spot where, beyond the village, on a pile of stones, together they had often watched the sun go down. When they were seated St. Helen said, "Well—you have my secret—the secret I would protect with my life."

"You told me something when it seemed you were dying —an incredible thing."

"Incredible? Perhaps. I said, 'I am John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln.' "

"And I said, 'It is not true.' "

"Would to God you had been right."

"I cannot conceive of you, John St. Helen, committing a deed so bad."

" 'O would the deed were good! For now the devil that told me I did well, says that this deed is chronicled in hell!' Denial of the damning fact does not change it."

"My reason must have proof. It refuses to believe. And first, let me ask, if this monstrous accusation you make against yourself—be true, why do you make it? Why smirch your name with the stain of a dead crime when no good can come of it?"

"I am a Catholic in belief. I say this, not to attach disgrace to my Mother Church, for had I followed her teachings, I would have been a saint instead of a sinner. I mention it by way of explanation of the necessity ordering my soul to make confession before passing into judgment. Perhaps it is not the teachings of my church that accounts for this insistent urge to make confession. Perhaps it is

the desire of men of every creed to unburden their souls of sin before death. Perhaps you wonder why I have not made my confession to a priest. I have made confession more than once, but never a full confession. The identity of the man I killed was never divulged and for such confession there is no forgiveness.

"Another reason for the vital necessity of a confession as to my identity is the clearing of the name of Mary E. Surratt from the infamous charge for which she was hanged. She was no more guilty of conspiracy to murder than you are. She knew no more about the murder than I did two days before the act was committed, and that was nothing.

"There are other reasons why it was necessary that my identity be revealed. Perhaps these two are sufficient for the present."

"But John Wilkes Booth was killed in the Garrett barn and his remains identified!" Finis Bates exclaimed.

"Beside you, within touch of your hand, sits the living evidence that John Wilkes Booth was not shot nor his remains ever identified."

"Proof! Proof! Nothing but proof can make me believe it. No circumstantial evidence will be taken as evidence in such a case as this."

"It should not be I will admit. Yet the whole and only proof that Booth was shot in the barn was circumstantial, and the flimsiest kind at that.

"I suppose no man, not excepting the lawyers in the conspiracy trial themselves kept closer watch of this case than I did in the early days when it was in every man's mouth and the papers were full of it.

"From the place of my first hiding, until Booth had been

killed, the conspiracy trial ended and the conspirators hung, there was little I did not get hold of.

"You are a lawyer. I ask you to listen with a legal mind for the value of testimony, to what I am about to tell you. When I shall have finished I will have proven to you that I am none other than John Wilkes Booth, son of Junius Brutus Booth and brother to Edwin Booth, Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., and Dr. Joseph A. Booth.

"First let us get the stage set for the act—the great fraud act of the capture of John Wilkes Booth.

"The assassination took place on the night of April 14th, 1865, just a few days after the surrender of Lee. At the time military forces around Washington were in command of General C. C. Augur. All entrances to the city were closed and nobody could pass without the pass word. John Wilkes Booth had it. How did he come by it? Did you ever think of that?

"When it became known to General Augur that President Lincoln had been shot and that the assassin had probably gone south, General Augur sent a body of men under Provost Marshall Dana after him.

"Two days later, no clew of the assassin having been discovered by Dana, Secretary of War Stanton summoned Colonel L. C. Baker, head of the government Secret Service to his office for orders to the effect that the Secret Service should enter the search for Booth.

"The first reward offered was $20,000 by the city of Washington and $10,000 by the Secret Service Department.

"Under Lieutenant Baker, a nephew of Colonel Baker, a searching party was dispatched into southern Maryland to capture Booth.

"Arriving there these men found General Augur's military men already in the field and hoping to obtain the

reward. To this end they gave the Baker men no help but on the other hand threw them off of every chance clew and so interfered with their search that Lieutenant Baker returned to Washington with the report that he could do nothing on account of the military wing of the searching force. While this quarreling was going on between these parties, the amount of the rewards was increased until it was over $200,000, an amount sufficient to invite hundreds, perhaps thousands of soldiers and citizens to enter the man hunt.

"Meantime, where was I, Booth? Leaving Washington by the East Potomac bridge, my first stop was at Dr. Mudd's where my injured leg was put in a splint and a cane provided for me. From here, with Herold, I went to the home of a man named Coxe by whom I was put in charge of a hired man who conducted me to a safe hiding place in a thicket.

"Keep this hired man in mind as he is the man who, it appears, was killed in the barn.

"His name I never knew. It sounded like Roddy, or Ruddy, or Bobby. I called him 'Jimmie'. This man agreed to get a message for me to General Mosby's command below Bowling Green—a message that would bring Confederate officers to my aid—trusted men to give me safe conduct across the Rappahannock River.

"This man made the necessary trip and returned with the news that the officers, Captain Jett, Lieutenant Bainbridge and Major Ruggles would be at the Rappahannock the next day at two o'clock to meet me and see me safely through far into the South.

"Between my hiding place and the ferry at Port Royal on the river there lay a long stretch of public highway.

To escape detection in getting over this I traveled in the bottom of a wagon-bed piled high with household goods.

"The ferry was reached in safety. The three Confederate officers were awaiting my arrival.

"When I looked in my pocket for my check and some other papers, after crossing the river, I found them missing. The wagon was yet on the opposite side of the river and certain my pocket papers had been shaken out in the bottom of the wagon, I asked my man 'Jimmie' to recross the river and get them, keep them until he saw me the next day at Garrett's farm where we were to meet.

"He recrossed the river and I suppose got the papers and check. At any rate somebody got the papers for it was by these the body in the barn was identified as that of myself, John Wilkes Booth.

"Captain Jett let me have his horse to go with Lieutenant Bainbridge and Major Ruggles to the Garrett home, he starting on foot with Herold and 'Jimmie' who were going by a short cut to Bowling Green, about fifteen miles distant, to get me a shoe for my lame foot and some other things for our further journey.

"Arriving at the Garrett place which was, as near as I remember, about three miles from the main road, arrangements were made by the Confederate officers for me to stay until they came for me two days later. They were to keep watch, however, and warn me if any searching party came near.

"All was quiet the first night. But the second afternoon I was told by the Confederate officers who came dashing to the gate, that a party of Federal soldiers, on my trail, had just taken the road to Bowling Green. They showed me a wooded ravine joining the Garrett place in which

they told me to hide until they returned with a fresh horse, which would be inside of an hour.

"Taking my pistol and field glasses I made my way to the wooded ravine where in less than an hour the Confederate officers found me. They had a fresh horse—a good one and together we three left the vicinity of the Garrett place, barn and all, and kept going.

"Keep in mind that I have now left the Garrett place and there is no record of my capture and return to be shot in a barn for I assure you, once away, *I kept going.*

"Before giving you an outline of my further travels, let me tell you what, from all accounts, and I have read many, happened at the Garrett place and shortly before.

"Lieutenant Baker, you will remember had returned to Washington with the report that he could do nothing on account of the contrary activities of Augur's men.

"He was therefore given the protection of twenty-five soldiers under command of Lieutenant Dougherty and sent back into southern Maryland with orders not to return until he found Booth.

"Believing Booth had gone to Bowling Green his natural and safe course in getting to General Mosby, Lieutenant Baker followed this road and it was this company the Confederate soldiers saw the afternoon of the day I left the Garrett place. Ruggles and Bainbridge had a hot chase themselves to escape for they were seen by these Federals several of whom gave chase. My men, however, knew the country and lost themselves from their pursuers in the wooded ravine which I later met them in.

"Unable to catch the Confederates the Dougherty party with Lieutenant Baker turned back to the Bowling Green road. It was afternoon, they were tired as Ruggles and Bainbridge could see; they had fifteen miles to go and

fifteen to return before reaching the Garrett farm even should they be directed to it. This gave us good time to put the miles between us that saved me.

"Arriving at Bowling Green late at night Baker went to the hotel where he found Captain Jett. On pain of quick hanging unless he told what he knew, Jett admitted he had seen me and that I had gone to the Garrett place. By the party, now hot on my trail, he was taken back to show the way to my resting place. It has been written that the party was so tired it was necessary to kick the men to keep them awake.

"About ten o'clock, according to the account given by one of the Garrett boys, Herold and a man with him, came from somewhere asking for a place to sleep and were told they could use the barn—or tobacco house.

"I suppose the man with Herold was my man 'Jimmie' bringing to me, with other things the papers I had lost from my pockets. He did not of course know I was not at the Garrett place.

"The Dougherty and Baker party returning from Bowling Green reached the Garrett place about four o'clock in the morning. Dragging old man Garrett from bed they demanded to know where the men were who had been at his house that day. He told them the men had gone to the woods and not returned. This was true of me and the Confederate officers.

"But it did not satisfy the searching party and the life of the old man was threatened unless he told where the men were. It was then one of his sons, who knew Herold and another man had come in late, gave the information that the men they sought were in the outhouse.

"Let me ask you to bear in mind that neither Lieutenant Baker nor Lieutenant Dougherty nor Colonel Conger of

the party had never seen Booth—me.[1] The Garretts had never seen me—. If there was a man in the party who had ever seen Booth, history has not made him known.[2] It is therefore certain Booth could not have been identified by sight.

"Herold, in the barn, knew me. But it is a significant fact that Herold, at first protesting Booth was not the man in the barn, was later not allowed to open his mouth as to the identity of this man.

"Surrounding the barn, a demand was made that the men surrender.

"The conversation clearly shows that the man with Herold was not Booth. Boston Corbett, the man who shot the supposed Booth, in his sworn testimony, as reported in the trial [3] says one of the men in the barn said of the other 'I declare before my Maker this man is innocent of any crime whatever.' This was Herold speaking of the other man. But so eager were the human blood hounds to get their prey, for the reward's sake, they could not let a small matter like identification stop them in their capturing act.

"Herold surrendered. The man who remained in the barn was shot in the back through a crack in the building. He was dragged out and declared to be John Wilkes Booth.

"Will you now consider the evidence of this contention?

[1] See Conger testimony, small type, p. 362, and Conspiracy Trial, p. 59; Dougherty testimony, Conspiracy Trial, p. 81.

[2] An affadavit made March 31, 1922, by Wilson D. Kenzie, gives evidence that there were two men in the party at the Garrett barn who knew John Wilkes Booth well. These men were Wilson D. Kenzie and Joe Zisgen, Federal soldiers who first met Booth while they were stationed in New Orleans while the actor was playing there. When the body was taken from the barn, both men declared it was not Booth. They were ordered to keep their mouths shut. This Kenzie affidavit contains evidential matter of first importance. It is in the Bates collection and this reference to it is made by permission of Mrs. F. L. Bates.

[3] Conspiracy Trial, p. 59.

"One man said he knew him by his likeness to his brother Edwin Booth whom he had once seen. Was that evidence? Another said he knew it was John Wilkes Booth by the way he acted. Was this evidence? Then there were the Booth papers found on the body. Was this evidence—sufficient evidence to rest the case on? And back in Washington, where the body was as closely guarded as if it had been solid gold studded with diamonds, it was identified by a physician who, though he testified he would never have recognized the body by its appearance, identified it by a scar on the back of the neck. Was this evidence of identity? Are scars so uncommon on the back of men's necks? I have a scar myself. Since by scars John Wilkes Booth was identified, examine this."

Removing his tie and loosening his collar St. Helen turned the back of his neck toward Mr. Bates and ran his fingers over a scarred place.

"Here is the scar the physician was trying to identify the body by. His name was Dr. May. He removed a little tumor for me over a year before I made my escape. The scar stays with me—one of my body marks.

"Lieutenant Baker himself said there were rumors that Booth had never been captured. So before the Conspiracy Trial he was sent again into lower Maryland to collect evidence. This time, not far from the Garrett place, in the wooded ravine to be exact, the glasses were found. Was this evidence that Booth had been killed in the barn? How did the glasses get in the woods? I took them, to be sure, and in my hurry to escape, forgot them. Otherwise they would have been found in the barn with the other scraps of evidence.

"Vivid was the description of the capture of John Wilkes Booth as given to the press. Here is the picture.

He stood with a crutch under either arm, his carbine levelled, his waving black hair tossed back from his high forehead, lips compressed, mingled hatred and terror in his dark eyes and the defiance of a tiger hunted to his lair. In one hand he held a revolver, in the other the carbine levelled as just stated. His belt contained another revolver and a bowie knife. He seemed prepared to fight to the end, no matter what numbers appeared against him. The account then described the burning building in which this man loaded with crutches and guns and knives stood. It said, 'the hunted assassin stood in a glow of fire more brilliant than the lightings of any theatre in which he had ever played.' The next scene was the throwing away of the crutch—one now—the mad leap in the air as the shot from the back struck his head, the seizure of the body, the dragging out, the dying words to a mother and all the rest of the stuff told about the man who now sits beside you—you, Finis L. Bates, telling it into your ears."

"Another strange tale," Mr. Bates said. "Too strange!"

"You are right. It is about the strangest story ever told. Strange in face of the evidence, for you would not throw out the sworn statements made at the Conspiracy Trial by men like Jett and Conger would you?[4] Much of the evidence in this case is on record. Read it. And let me ask a few questions for you to answer—you and all others who believe John Wilkes Booth was the man shot in the barn.

1. Why was the body not allowed to be seen? I was well known in Washington. Thousands could have identified my body.
2. Why was this body of John Wilkes Booth not given to his

[4] Court record of Conspiracy Trial.

family for burial as is the custom with even the worst of criminals? Mrs. Surratt's body was delivered to her family.

3. Why was Herold never allowed to open his mouth? He knew Booth was not in the barn with him. Why were no newspapers allowed to interview Herold?
4. What became of the man who was hired by Booth to make arrangements for his safe conduct to General Mosby's camp? He would have made a star witness. How is his mysterious disappearance accounted for?
5. Why were all the awards for the capture of Booth never paid? Why the long wrangle in Congress over the portions paid?

These and many other questions remain to this day unanswered."

"And so far as I am concerned," Finis Bates replied, "they can remain unanswered. I do not know whether the man killed in the barn was Booth or not. Whoever he was you have not proven that *you* are John Wilkes Booth."

St. Helen drew his fingers quietly over his black moustache letting them linger on the end in a twisting motion as he looked into the face of Bates.

"Never was there a greater test of friendship—never was there so steadfast a belief in the character of a friend. But since I have gone so far in the proof of my identity, I will finish. Then you can think as you must.

"Have you ever noticed that my right eye brow arches up where the left lies straight? Have you ever noticed the deformed thumb of my right hand?

"The eye brow was laid open by a sword stroke in the hands of the actor McCullom as we practiced the sword scene in Richard III. It was sewed up—grew as the cut lay—up and down. The thumb was crushed when as a boy

I was trying to shift some scenery in my brother Edwin's theatre in Baltimore. These, with the scar on my neck and on my right leg, are the body marks of John Wilkes Booth as you know if you have ever read much of him."

"I have not read of him—or these marks."

"Perhaps you will sometime."

There was a pause. Neither man spoke nor looked at the other.

When St. Helen continued it was to speak briefly of his escape and subsequent travels.

"Safely out of Maryland and across Virginia, I reached Friendville on Raccoon Creek in Kentucky where I stopped for a rest at the home of a half sister of my mother who had married a man named Nathaniel Foster Newman.[5] He organized and was president of the Knights of the Golden Circle in his locality and I knew I would be safe there. My aunt bathed my badly swollen leg with hot water, put hot cloths on it all through the first night—I will never forget it. As an appreciation of her kindness I paid a mortgage for her later which lifted a big load from her heart.

"My next rest after leaving Kentucky was in the mountains of Tennessee. Then at Catfish Point where I found loyal friends. Again in Arkansas I rested before going into the Territory where I lived with the Indians for a while, mostly the Apache though I stayed with a Cherokee chief for a short time. From the Territory across Kansas and north to Nebraska, from there south and west to California and from there to China. I was on the Pelew Islands as you

[5] Affidavit by N. C. Newman, son of Nathaniel Foster Newman and cousin of John Wilkes Booth, made June 27, 1921, contains extremely valuable evidence and much matter of historical interest. This affidavit is in the Bates collection and is referred to by permission of Mrs. F. L. Bates.

read in 'A Strange Tale.' Some of the story was correct. Some mixed—by accident or purposely, as about the woman said to be my wife. From the Far East to Cuba, back for a time to the states, Kentucky, Tennessee and Mississippi, then to Mexico—and over the border into Texas. I have been in half the states of the Union and many foreign countries, my name often changed and my identity concealed.

"But there is one person, or identity or thing—call it what you will, that I have never been able to conceal my identity from—never been able to evade or lose myself from, and that is the spirit of Abraham Lincoln. The man I told you of whose belief in spirits is as well founded as the belief in his own existence, was myself. I have seen—seen with my eyes—felt with my soul—the spirit of the man I shot in Ford's Theatre over a dozen years ago. With the appearance of this ghost or spirit or apparition, as you wish, there has sounded a voice, more mysterious than the ghost itself. It has been years since I saw it last. But it is ever real. The ghost itself is a mystery. The Voice is a mystery. But the strangest thing about it to me is that the ghost is friendly. I no longer fear it as when it first appeared. Beyond doubt the soul of Abraham Lincoln is big—big—big beyond the measure of a sinner's mind to comprehend."

"St. Helen," Finis Bates said, his eyes on the face of his friend, "barring your talk about ghosts, which shows you are yet not fully recovered from your severe illness, you would have made your case had I been listening with the ear of a lawyer instead of the ear of a friend. As it is, I do not accept your story because I choose not to. What you have told me shall be as if you had buried it in a bottomless grave. To me you are my friend John St. Helen. I have not power to think of you in any other way."

For nearly a year after St. Helen had attempted to reveal his identity to Finis Bates, the warm friendship continued, no further reference being made to the matter. At the end of this time Mr. Bates decided to return to Mississippi.

The discovery, in 1877, of chloride of silver in washings for gold in California Gulch, Colorado, was drawing adventurers and fortune seekers in great numbers to Leadville and to this high point on the Mosquito range of the Elk Mountains, John St. Helen decided to go.

The parting of the two men was without words. A hand grasp and they had separated forever.

CHAPTER XXXII

MRS. TEMPLE'S STORY

AMONG the several who greeted an incoming coast-bound passenger train in a California village in the early summer of 1878, was a man who seemed marked in some manner by a separateness from his fellows.

Perhaps it was his eyes that gave the impression that while he walked with other men he was apart from them. They were dark eyes with a troubled expression as if looking for something already forever past, or perhaps locked in the future, the vague fear of something. Elusive but none the less haunting were those dark eyes if one had studied them.

He bought his paper and had just turned toward the station when a couple of women came down the car steps and hurriedly took their way to the eating room.

As they passed the man with haunted eyes, a breath of perfume floated after them.

Its effect on the man was electrical. A sudden light flashed in his eyes, the muscles in his fingers twitched and he drew a short breath as his feet, quickly and without bidding, followed the woman.

Close behind them he caught the faint perfume of lilacs. He inhaled it eagerly, feverishly. The din of voices and escaping steam and grating wagon wheels suddenly died to a far away background of dull rhythm against which the strains of a Strauss waltz sounded in dreamy melody.

A sharp pain caught his heart. Beneath the brim of the hat and the collar of the traveling coat worn by the woman, his eyes rested on chestnut brown hair drawn

softly up from a slender white neck, and there was an easy swing in the woman's walk that added to the man's apparent nervousness.

"My God!" he breathed, "can it be she? God, that the face may be hers!"

With eyes feverishly bright and a pounding heart the man followed the woman of chestnut hair and lilac perfume to a table opposite that beside which she sat. With a swift eager glance he scanned her face. As he did so the color left his own and the pain tightened like a core in his heart—it was so strange—so different a face from that of his sweetest life memory.

Mechanically he ordered coffee which he tried to sip. But his throat seemed to have contracted and after another glance at the strange face he left the table clutching his newspaper tightly as if for support.

On a bench in the yard of his rooming place, the man a few moments later turned to his newspaper for something to drive the rush of memories, alike sweet and painful, from his mind. News from the East was nearly a week old when it reached California but it was news never-the-less.

The setting sun threw its slanting gold light across his page illuminating headlines and print, but it was not until he had turned several pages that his eye lit up with anything like real interest.

It was the words, "Booth and Bob Lincoln," that caught his eye in a first headline. Following this was three columns of print entitled, "Mrs. Temple's Story," a story told the writer of the article by Mrs. Temple herself, special friend of Senator and Mrs. Hale and their daughter Bessie, and friend and confidant of John Wilkes Booth.

He read:—

"Among all of Bessie Hale's admirers Booth was the most ardent and devoted, distancing all competitors except one, and that was the President's oldest son, Robert Lincoln,

who was madly in love with Bessie. He courted her again and again and would not take 'No' for an answer. He had a heavy backing, for both the senator and his wife, aware of the splendid advantages of the match, urged their daughter to marry Robert Lincoln and queen it at the White House, which in those days was like the palace of royalty itself. She would have given in, I am confident, but for Booth, who, with his charm of person, manner and intellect, carried the day and won her heart but not her hand; for her parents frowned down and most emphatically vetoed the intimacy between their daughter and the actor, indeed, both father and mother considered it a great piece of presumption for the 'player' to make love off the scenic stage. John Wilkes Booth they considered divine in the princely role of *Hamlet* or wearing the slashed doublet and habiliments of the half prince, half peasant *Melnotte,* but as a son-in-law to the first senator in the land! There the charm ceased and they commanded the daughter never to think of him.

"How much Bessie Hale really cared for Booth none of us knew; probably not even himself could tell. No one was aware of the absorbing, true devoted affection that Bessie had for him—a love great in its purity and singleness, firm in its attachment, as true as death itself and stronger than life and death combined. Only in the fearful trial and the awful times of menace and of peril did this love shine out in all its brightness, lighting the lurid darkness with its beams, even as the rays of the lighthouse gleam out across the waste of angry waters."

The story continued, describing scenes and people that made a long past and dead life fresh in the mind of the reader. After giving many intimate descriptions of the social activities of the winter of 1864 with the love affairs of Booth and Bessie Hale well set forth, the writer said:

"At last the great event happened that we had all wished for, hoped for, prayed for during all the four long, weary years—Lee surrendered at Appomattox Court House —and it seemed as if the people were delirious with joy. At our hotel there was one round of congratulations and rejoicings. Every night the parlors would be thronged

with an anxious, eager, excited party who would discuss, drink and dance the night through. Amid all these scenes Booth moved—calm, stern, silent, cold. His manner was utterly changed and instead of a ranting, romantic boy he seemed a composed practical man.

"We all knew that the triumph of the Federal army was a blasting of his most cherished hopes and none of us said anything to him on the subject. And so the fated days sped swiftly by; and while a nation was drunk with joy, while the ringing of the bells, the crackling of the bonfires and the blaze of martial music all united into a Te Deum in honor of victory and peace—this cold young man carried in his breast a secret that would, if told, have made the world stare with horror.

"So time passed until the sun rose on that fated Friday morning, April 14, 1865. John Wilkes came into the parlor at noon and stayed there only a few moments. He seemed restless and excited but not enough so to attract any attention from us. He left in an hour and went down, as he said, to witness the rehearsal of the new play, 'Our American Cousin.' Mrs Hale and myself thought of going that night but he strongly advised us not, saying, as I remember, that it was Good Friday and that few people would be present and the play would drag on that account. After that we decided to postpone our intention and go the night after.

"Dinner passed off pleasantly and we retired to our rooms for our post-prandial nap and did not re-assemble together until the evening when about half an hour before supper we all met in the parlor. There were Senator Hale and his wife and I and Bessie and an English lady who was staying at the hotel. A few minutes after we were seated John Wilkes Booth came in and greeted us all with the utmost cordiality and the same old graceful bow that he, and he only, could make. He seemed to be in good spirits and laughed at the machinery of the play.

"After a little desultory conversation he and Bessie drew off together and carried on an earnest conversation in low tones. I recollect thinking what a pretty picture the two made. The room was brilliantly lighted in front by leaving the lower portion of it in the shadow. The two seemed to be utterly unconscious that anyone in the

world except themselves existed. Bessie Hale reclined on a huge velvet arm-chair, her black silk contrasting and well set off by the red velvet background. Her eyes were luminous and shone like stars as she listened with her soul in her face to Booth who sat beside and above her.

"Booth seemed to be inspired and the musical murmur of his voice could be heard but not his words. He was evidently impassioned to the highest degree and Bessie sat like the charmed princess in the Arabian Nights—spellbound. I do not think that any woman on earth could listen to Booth unmoved when he chose to exert himself. His beautiful language, tender ways, personal beauty, rich voice and magnetic presence, all combined, made him a romantic maiden's ideal actually personified. God knows what was passing in his heart as he sat there with the only woman he had ever loved, and only He who knoweth all things could read the stormy workings of the heart that was torn with the battle of contending passions. No wonder the dark eyes gleamed with an unnatural luster and softened with unutterable longing as he gazed his last on the fair woman beside him. And she looked up at him as only a wholly loving woman looks upon her heart's king.

"At last the whole party arose to go to supper and the two were brought back to themselves again. They followed us slowly and just as I left the parlor I heard Booth say, 'Ah! Bessie! Bessie! Can I trust you utterly?' And her reply came clear but with a world of melancholy in the tones, 'Even as Ruth say I—even unto death.'

"He took her hand and gazed with one long, lingering look in her face. I noticed his eyes grow soft with a beautiful tender radiance and his sensitive mouth quivered and showed the white teeth beneath the moustache. Then he shook his head with a determined movement, dropped her hand, turned and disappeared through the open doorway, and as we gazed, none of us thought our eyes were looking for the last in this world upon the wayward genius whom we had all grown so to love.

"I cannot tell how we passed that fearful evening—much no doubt as the rest; we laughed, talked and jested as was our wont, and no shadow of the impending event fell upon us. The hours sped swiftly by until ten o'clock. Then our little circle broke up. As I kissed Bessie good

night I could not help saying to her, 'My dear, you look exquisitely lovely tonight—sweeter and prettier than I ever saw you.' She only smiled and left the parlor.

"I went to my room and being tired, undressed and went to bed. It seemed as if I had been asleep but a minute when I was aroused by an indefinable noise that served to wake but was not loud enough to startle one. Doors were slamming all over the house and a murmur of voices was heard. I thought at first that some one was sick and that a doctor was being hurriedly sent for; but the noise still continuing, I imagined there must be a fire in the vicinity. This idea caused me to jump up at once and open the window; and I heard the sound of many horses' feet striking the pavements in a full run but no fire bells or alarms; but still the inexplicable sounds continued.

"'The rebels have stormed the city' was my next expression and with that I hastily threw on my wrapper and hurried to my parlor. There was no one there and I kept on until I got to the grand salon and there I found a crowd of people mostly like myself guests of the hotel and *dishabille*.

"To our scared look and frenzied interrogation, 'What has happened?' came in hushed and awful accents, 'President Lincoln has been murdered by Booth while he sat in his box at the theatre.'

"'By Booth' I incredulously asked. 'By John Booth? Oh no, that is impossible!'

"As the crowd surged to and fro in uncontrollable excitement, Bessie Hale came in, and as she heard the dreadful news she screamed, and before anyone could reach her, fell prone upon the floor. She was carried up to her room.

"That night of horror seems like a frightful dream to me even now after thirteen years have passed. None of us retired but sat in the parlor in a kind of dumb terror. The gentlemen were gone all night and the ladies sat closely clustered together in a piteous condition and not until the grey dawn came stealing in did we retire, sick at heart and with heavy, wet eyelids for we then knew the worst—the President dying, the Secretary wounded and our favorite flying from justice with the burden of a mighty sin upon his guilty soul.

"During the whole time of the pursuit of Booth we waited in a dreadful state of suspense, the end. A thous-

and rumors were flying about and people seemed nearly crazed with all the startling events that followed each other in succession.

"In all these hours Bessie Hale kept in her room and none but her mother and physician were admitted to see her.

"A day or two after the assassination—a never to be forgotten day—the report came, substantiated, that John Wilkes Booth had been captured and was being brought back to Washington. It was told Bessie and she came into my room in a fearful state of excitement and the proud girl seemed to have lost all control of herself.

"I did the best I could to calm her and finally succeeded. She wrote a letter to Booth telling him she loved him and concluded by saying she would marry him even at the foot of the scaffold.

"At last the news came of his capture and death and finally all Washington turned out to view the remains though but a few men were allowed to look upon the corpse. On the 27th of April a small boat received the remains and they carried the body off into the darkness and from the darkness it will never return.

"Robert Lincoln never met Bessie Hale afterward and soon married a daughter of Senator Harlan of Iowa.

"Bessie never recovered from the shock. The shadows of the past full of mingled sweetness and pain, and of ecstatic dreams and abhorred reminiscences, left its imprint on mind and brain, and, like one touched by Ithuriel's span, she shivered, cowered and changed in an hour from a happy, radiant maiden into a sad, silent woman who lived in a live world while she herself was dead.

"The Senator took her to Europe hoping the change of scene would make her forget the past. Vain faith! I saw her years ago and the fair, sweet though pain-drawn face, the sad, patient smile, haunt me like a dream. She married a short time ago but if I were to write her life I should call it, 'A Dead Woman's Life'."

For a moment after the man finished reading he held the paper in mechanical hands. Then it slipped from them and fell to the ground. He did not notice—did not move

until a sigh, that shuddered through his body like the agony of a dying breath, he dropped his head upon his motionless hands with the words, "Thirteen years of death—for me—for her. Merciful God—if I could but forget—forget!"

When he lifted his face sunset and twilight had given place to the dark. A star shone infinitely far away. A faint breath touched his cheek. He turned his face eagerly —thirstily. But the breeze passed, too weak to stir the dark hair on the hot forehead leaving the star alone to keep watch over the man and his heart graveyard in which the ghosts of memories were painfully stalking.

CHAPTER XXXIII

"MY GOD! JOHN WILKES BOOTH!"

MARY ANN HOLMES, wife of Junius Brutus Booth and mother of the famous Booth actors, left her mortal body October 22nd, 1885.

Among the letters and messages sent out by her sons after the mother's death was one to a man in Village Mills, Texas. The name on the address was not "Booth" though the letter bore news that the mother of the man was dead.

The reading of the brief letter brought no tears. But the man experienced the kind of hurt that shortens the breath and lingers long in numb pain when he learned that his mother had spoken his name with her last conscious breath, and a sharp pang—a reproachful pang cut his heart when he read the physician's opinion that it was nothing more than a broken heart which time had not power to mend, that caused her death.

Shortly after news of the death of Mrs. Booth had been received by her son who was not known by his father's name, he left Village Mills and took up his place of residence for a time in Fort Worth.

It was one night while sitting quietly in the Pickwick bar room at Fort Worth the man overheard a conversation which interested him because it had to do with Arkansas, and his memory of comfortable days spent in the old Anthony House always came to him at mention of the state's name.

One of the speakers had lived in Arkansas. The man could not see his face. But one, the gentleman listening to the man from Arkansas, who was telling about a poem called "The Old Canoe" and its writer, the man from Village Mills knew. He had known him in that town

before he had come to Fort Worth to take a newspaper position. The other man was Tom Powell, mayor of the city. [1]

It was not until the three men arose that the listener to their conversation saw the face of the speaker.

"Albert Pike," he exclaimed to himself, for the face his eyes fell on was the one he had so much admired as it hung in its frame in the old Anthony House.

Twenty years had gone by since then. The dark hair of Albert Pike was streaked with grey. So was his own.

Time had left its imprint on the face of the lawyer, poet, soldier, in a tracing of lines.

So had time marked his own face—marked it, as he imagined, beyond recognition.

The men crossed the room slowly, talking. At the bar they stopped for further conversation and a drink.

Thinking to leave the hotel unnoticed, the man late of Village Mills started toward the door.

Passing the bar he turned for a last look at Albert Pike, when in that moment, Albert Pike turned his eyes on the face of the man who was looking at him.

The recognition was instantaneous.

"My God! John Wilkes Booth!"

The words were uttered in such a voice of surprise and fear as caused the sharp attention of his companions, and none too soon for the face of General Pike was ashy and his step for the moment, unsteady.

Before the famous Pike had recovered enough from the shock of his surprise to look again for the man whose appearance had so startled him, he was nowhere to be seen.

Outside the hotel the man said to himself, "His friend will tell him it is a case of mistaken identity. He knew me in Village Mills. John Wilkes Booth was shot in the Garrett barn twenty years and six months ago."

[1] "Wanderings of Booth," p. 62.

CHAPTER XXXIV

AFTER TWENTY YEARS

In June, 1893, Edwin Booth, the great American actor, passed from the stage of mortal action where he had made his name immortal to that larger stage, beyond whose exquisitely mysterious curtain mortal eyes are unfitted to see.

Following his exit much publicity was given to his life story and one of the interested readers of this life was a gentleman in a Texas town to whom the name of Booth was not unfamiliar.

It was night when he read and he was alone. From an evening train he had bought a St. Louis newspaper and an Eastern magazine—both containing Booth articles.

"Edwin Booth," he read "was one of four sons born to Junius Brutus Booth. Two of the others, Junius Brutus, Jr., and the youngest boy, John Wilkes as well as Edwin, were actors, but neither rose to the same heights of fame. John Wilkes had been endowed by Nature with all the qualifications that go to make the immortal artist. His brief career on the stage had fully demonstrated this. But his star of promise sank forever into the midnight of ignominy by his one mad act."

The reader lifted his eyes from the paper and turned them toward a bit of bare wall. But for their retrospective vision there was no wall.

The man sighed.

It was not a sigh born of any fresh grief or loss. It was a closed lip sigh such a one as works back into the heart like a vagrant dying breath returned to haunt where it can no longer torture.

His eyes turned to the paper. The next paragraph told of the million dollar Booth Theatre built in New York and of Edwin Booth's statement to certain clergymen who criticized his art and questioned its morality. He said, "There is no door in my theatre through which God cannot see."

"God," the lone man repeated. "My mother's God—and his. In that heaven where my mother is my brother must be also. God—God."

His eyes again turned to the story falling on the words, "John Wilkes Booth." The questioning look in the dark eyes changed to an expression of interest. He read a letter written in 1881 by Edwin Booth to a friend who had inquired for information concerning the great actor's brother, John Wilkes Booth.

"I can give you very little information regarding my brother John. I seldom saw him since his early boyhood in Baltimore. He was a rattle-pated fellow filled with Quixotic notions. While at the farm in Maryland he would charge on horseback through the woods, spouting heroic speeches with a lance in his hand, a relic of the Mexican war given to father by some soldier who had served under Taylor. We regarded him as a good hearted, harmless though wild-brained boy, and used to laugh at his patriotic froth whenever secession was discussed.

"That he was insane on that one point no one who knew him well can doubt. When I told him that I had voted for Lincoln's re-election he expressed deep regret and declared his belief that Lincoln would be made king of America; and this I believe drove him beyond the limits of reason. I asked him once why he did not join the Confederate army to which he replied, 'I promised mother I would keep out of the quarrel if possible and I am sorry that I said so.'

"Knowing my sentiments he avoided me, rarely visiting my house except to see his mother, when political topics were not touched upon, at least not in my presence. He

was of a gentle, loving disposition, very boyish and full of fun, his mother's darling, and his deed and death crushed her spirit. He possessed rare dramatic talent and would have made a brilliant mark in the theatrical world. This is positively all I know about him, having left him a mere school boy when I went with my father to California in 1852. On my return in '56 we were separated by professional engagements which kept him mostly in the South while I was employed in the Eastern and Northern States.

"I do not believe any of the wild romantic stories published in the papers concerning him, but, of course he may have been engaged in political matters of which I knew nothing. All his theatrical friends speak of him as a poor, crazy boy and such his family think of him."

"A poor, crazy boy."

The man spoke the words. They were uttered without sympathy or sadness. "His friends speak of him—no, they *spoke* of him. He has been too long dead to be talked of now. His family think of him—no, his family are all dead, too dead to think—gone to the bourne from which no wanderer returns."

The oil lamp flickered.

The man moved the lamp. There was yet more reading for him, the magazine story.

"The Last of John Wilkes Booth," he read. "A story told by an old property man who once served Edwin Booth at the Booth Theatre, of whom the great actor was quite fond.

"It happened early in '73," the story ran.* "The day had been one of storm and drifting snow, one of those belated days in New York when winter forgets to become spring. Mr. Booth had a snug suite of apartments high up over the stage in which most of his time was spent between his hours of business and acting in the theatre.

"Richard III was on for a short run and had drawn a fine audience that night in spite of the storm. And say!

* Otis Skinner in the old American.

How he had played! Familiar as I was with his performance I found myself again and again standing in the wings watching him.

"On leaving his dressing room about twelve o'clock he gave me orders to wake him at three in the morning.

"After the lights of the theatre had been put out, I lay on a cot in the property room, but I couldn't sleep—I shouldn't have dared.

"Then, too, I got very nervous listening to the sleet beating against the window panes and to the strange sounds that seemed to come from every part of the big, empty theatre. The memory of his performance that night kept haunting me. How wonderful it had been! There was a little clock on a shelf opposite my couch and I watched its slow moving hands by the light of a lantern on the floor. Mighty glad I was when the time to call him arrived; the three hours from midnight had been the longest I ever knew.

"I mounted the stairway to his apartment, where, over a spirit lamp in the library I proceeded to make some strong coffee. This done, I opened the door of his bed room. He was breathing heavily in a dead sleep. Mr. Booth had one peculiarity—he was confused and irritated if suddenly waked from sleep; sometimes he would throw the nearest thing at hand at one who had roused him.

"As a precaution I removed the lamp, his pipe and the book with which he had read himself to sleep, his tobacco and all the movables from the reading stand beside his bed; even his boots I placed across the room. Then I shook him gently by the shoulder and told him the time. As I expected, he sat up dazedly and reached about for something to throw at me; but it was only for a moment that his wits wandered. He sat for a few minutes, looking down across the foot of his bed, very still and thoughtful. I fetched the coffee I had made. After drinking two cups of it he asked about the weather.

" 'Still snowing, Garrie?'

" 'Yes sir.'

" 'It's three o'clock you say?'

" 'Yes sir.'

"I helped him into his coat (he had lain down partly dressed) and took the lantern.

" 'Where are we going, Mr. Booth?' I asked.

" 'To the furnace room, Garrie,' he said.

"So I led the way down the stairs across the black stage and into the cellar. The theatre building was erected before the days of general steam heat and the furnace room was a cavernous place of vaulted brick which held the big, old fashioned heater that warmed it.

"Briggs, the fireman, had raked and banked his fire and gone home for the night when the performance was over, but now the furnace drafts were roaring again.

"I lighted a single gas jet and it made a bright spot in the gloom. Over near the furnace I saw an unusually large trunk, almost like a packing case, tied with ropes; there were seals on it, some on the cords at the edges where the cover and the body of the trunk met.

" 'I shall want an ax, Garrie,' said Mr. Booth. There was one in the corner by the coal-bins, and when I found it I was told to cut the cords of the trunk and knock off the top. This was but little work, for the box was rickety and old. The lid was soon off, and out came a smell of camphor and musty fabrics. There they lay, the costumes of John Wilkes Booth. Edwin must have told some one about the receipt of his brother's trunk for the story had got about the theatre. I didn't have to ask whose wardrobe it was. I shouldn't have had the courage to do so anyway; Mr. Booth's manner, the scary cellar and the weird hour of the morning weren't things that made for conversation.

"There was no tray in the trunk—the dresses lay solidly packed and on the top of the pile were some swords and wigs. For a few moments he stood looking down at the things, then he laid the wigs and swords on the overturned trunk cover and commenced taking out the costumes.

"The first was a Louis XVI coat of steel-blue broadcloth embroidered with flowers in silk—probably John Wilkes Booth's *Claude Melnotte* coat, I thought and was aching to ask but said nothing. He turned it about at arm's length, as if he were fancying his brother's figure

in it, and perhaps remembering when he saw it worn last. Then he handed it to me. 'Put it in there; he said pointing to the heater. I opened the furnace door—the coals were all red and blazing. I paused for a little—'twas such a shame to destroy so handsome a garment—and looked back at him, but he was as still as a statue—just waiting. There was no help for it. I threw it in. It settled down on the blaze with a sort of a hiss—a bit of the lace at the sleeve caught and the coat was in flames. We watched it without a word until it was nothing but a spread of red film in the blue coal flames. A satin waistcoat, a pair of knee breeches and several pairs of tights were next taken out, and they followed the coat. He didn't spend much time over these, merely handed them to me and motioned toward the fire.

"After these there was a black-headed *Hamlet* hauberk which Mr. Booth turned affectionately about before he passed it to me. It needed little guessing to know how hard it was for him to part with it. Then there came some 'shape' dresses of the Elizabethan period, and some fine silk hose and velvet shoes. They may have been worn for *Iago*—he had played the part. There were cavalier's costumes, such as are used in 'The Hunchback' and 'The Duke's Motto.' These had seen much service and showed their wear for John Wilkes' most successful performances with the exception of Richard III had been in the romantic plays. One, particularly striking, was a cut leather jerkin with slashed green velvet sleeves, a sword belt to match studded with steel nail heads, velvet trunks like the sleeves and a broad brimmed hat with a handsome ostrich feather. These with a pair of cavalier boots went to the funeral pyre. Then his Roman things for *Mark Antony*, the velvet coat and grey trousers he had worn for *Raphael* in the 'Marble Heart', his costumes for *Romeo, Shylock, Macbeth* and a gorgeous robe for *Othello* made of two East Indian shawls, so fine you could have pulled them through a lady's bracelet.

"Pinned in a cloth was a stunning Indian dress—genuine thing—with a photograph of John Wilkes in the same costume dated Richmond, Virginia, 1855–6. I guessed the part to be *Metamora*.

"It was agonizing living through these moments, while without a word Mr. Booth inspected each article, touching it fondly as if it were his own flesh and blood, before handing it to me to be burned. Sometimes a draft through the furnace door sent a swarm of floating sparks into the shadows of the cellar space and I watched them to see that they did not set fire to the building. He didn't notice them; his gaze was fixed on the flames and his face was drawn and white.

"Presently he came across a package of letters wrapped in a handkerchief and tied with a faded pink ribbon. As he examined their addresses I glanced over his shoulder and could see they were directed to his brother and some of them in what seemed to be a woman's hand. He had looked over only a few when his eye flashed, his lips pressed together, and crushing the package in one of his hands he moved quickly by me and threw it angrily on the coals. This was the first time he had been moved out of the calm which he had held since we began. 'Twas like some of the flashes of anger in his performance of *Othello*. But it was over in a moment—temper was always that way with him. Since that night I have wondered who had written those letters. No one will ever know.

"Finally he drew out of the trunk a long, belted, purple velvet 'shirt', ornamented with jewels and gilt lace and a like colored robe made to attach to the shoulders. Both garments were much creased and in places the fabric was worn threadbare. He held them out for a moment, then sat down on the edge of the trunk with the costume on his knees. For fully a minute he did not move and as he sat looking at the costume, his eyes filled with tears which ran down his cheeks falling on the tinseled trappings. After a while he glanced up at me as if for the first time he was aware that anyone was near him.

" 'My father's,' he said, his voice hoarse. 'Garrie, it was my father's Richard III dress. He wore it in Boston the night I first went on the stage as *Tressell.*'

" 'Don't you think you ought to save that, Mr. Booth,' I ventured to ask. He became quieter. 'No—put in with the others.' In a few minutes it was nothing but ashes. I felt as if I had assisted in a crime.

"He didn't linger so long with the various articles after this, except now and then to pause over a costume as if he were puzzling his brain to recall what part it had been used for. It was curious how eager he was to see every fragment destroyed. I was obliged to turn the flaming mass over so frequently my face and hands were scorched with the heat. Sometimes he took the iron from me and performed the task himself. When the bottom of the trunk had been reached and the last garment, a couple of finely wrought daggers, broken scraps of stage jewelry and various odds and ends which, strangely enough included a pair of women's pink satin dancing slippers, were thrust in the coals, I threw in the wigs and even the swords that lay upon the cover—they would break and melt before the fire could be mended again.

"At last I was directed to knock the trunk to pieces, and these with the cords that had bound the box, were the final contributions to the flames. We stood for a moment silently watching the shaky rims running through the feathery ashes and the sword blades glowing to a molten heat, then he bade me shut the furnace door.

"The sacrifice was complete—complete with one exception—a simple wreath of bays tied with a broad white ribbon. It was his one memento.

" 'That will do,' he said quietly. 'We will go.'

"The morning was still black; the storm had not broken; the wind was howling through the streets outside. Somewhere a shutter loose and creaking was being flung now and then by the wind against the side of the building and the echo of its blows went booming through the empty galleries."

The man who had been reading closed the magazine and pressed its cover tightly. Then he opened it again.

"He saved it," he said. "My wreath of bays—my brother saved it from the flames. All else is ashes—ashes! What did he save that token of a young man's glory and success for, or for whom? All, all are gone! Father—

mother—even the brothers—none are left and though my heart cry out in loneliness and black despair, yet from the silence comes no more answer than a burnt-out candle-flame gives back.

'Tis common; all that live must die
Passing through Nature to eternity.'

But what is this eternity? One little word from out the vast imponderable silence and though dead I could live and living, die untroubled."

The oil lamp sputtered and went out. The darkness was not unwelcome.

The man closed his eyes and rested his head against the back of his chair. As he did so he felt a gentle coolness stealing over him as if some far and unknown world were taking him motionless into its realistic unreality. And as before he experienced the strange sensation of hearing his own heart beat at some immeasurable distance. Then there were words.

"Mother's boy."

With the speed of thought the man was a child—a troubled child. He felt his head drawn to a mother's bosom, a mother's fingers pushing back his hair and the pressure of a mother's lips upon his brow as she said the two words that in their tone meant patience, forgiveness and above all, understanding. "Mother's boy."

It was his mother's words but as in times before it was not the voice of any mortal speaking. It was that mysterious Voice so infinitely near and yet so distinctly apart from the world of matter with which his five senses connected him.

Without opening his eyes the man turned in a direction he seemed drawn.

There it was, the apparition of past troubled years, standing at the threshold of his open door, its form of etheric proportions as distinctly visible against the background of the dark outer world as it had been when, for a passing moment, he had seen it last over twenty years before in the shadowy grotto of the Mexican mission.

"Spirit!" the man cried. "I know you! Friend of mine, you have brought my mother! Ten thousand years in Paradise were not enough to tell my thanks! Mother! Mother! My Mother!"

The breeze held its breath.

The midnight silence was broken by the voice of a man sobbing in the dark.

CHAPTER XXXV

REPENTANT TEARS

In 1899 there had been living in El Reno, Okla., for several years an elderly man named David E. George who kept a standing advertisement in an El Reno newspaper to the effect that he was a house painter.

It was not known that he worked steadily. When he did not he seemed to fare as well as when he did. He dressed well, stopped at the best hotel in the town and seemed to have sufficient income to at least provide well for a man, as he was, without a family. After having lived at the hotel some time, Mr. George purchased a home which he rented to a Mr. and Mrs. Simmons with whom he roomed. During a portion of the time that David E. George made his home with the Simmons, a minister named Harper and his wife also boarded there and the two became quite good friends of Mr. George.

To the ladies of the house Mr. George afforded a topic of speculation and discussion.

"I have been thinking about Mr. George," Mrs. Simmons said to Mrs. Harper one day as the latter came in from the yard with some lilac blooms. "He is a strange man, an unusual man in some ways. Today I heard something that makes me sure his past is shady. A man from Henessey, who saw Mr. George at the hotel today told Mr. Simmons he knows him well by the name of George Ryan. He lives or did live at Henessey and goes there frequently now. If he is not trying to cover up something will you tell me why he is going by two names?"

"Perhaps it is the kind of business he is in. Maybe he

does not want to be known as a painter in Henessey," Mrs. Harper said.

"If he's the same kind of painter there that he is here, his reputation wouldn't mean much for he does not hurt himself painting. I have a feeling that he has a past."

"Most men his age have."

"I mean something crooked. He is not what he seems—just a common old painter."

"No he is not a common old painter. He is eccentric to be sure. But with his strange ways he is highly intelligent, a splendid talker when he gets started, and always leaves the impression that he is a gentleman of culture and refinement."

"He does not seem to have many friends."

"No—he seems rather to avoid than run after people. Personally I like him and enjoy visiting with him."

"You wouldn't call him a good man would you?"

"I should hesitate to call him a bad man."

"He drinks a lot."

"A great many good men drink and will so long as there is a saloon on every corner.

"He isn't often what you would call drunk. When he is, he generally keeps to himself. Once when sober he raised a row around here though. My brother John—John Sanes—you know him, had been drinking and for some reason struck Mr. George in the head. He was so terribly angry he would have shot my brother had it not been for the Chief of Police, Robar,[1] who got hold of Mr. George and cooled him off."

"I have never heard of him making any trouble."

"Don't you think he takes a little morphine now and then? Those headache powders he uses—I have my own opinion about them."

[1] Campbell's "Wanderings of Booth," page 97.

"He seems to suffer a great deal at times, I thought it was his asthma."

"It's both and he has something else the matter with him too. It's no wonder he's melancholy and sad half the time and if a little drug helps him over these bad spells I'm not the one to begrudge it. But I'm going to keep my coffee pot handy. It might be useful if he should some day take too much. I'm going to look after him while he is under my roof. In some of his bad spells he is going to die. He doesn't seem to have a relative on earth and he may be enormously rich. There's something strange about him."

"I can think of nothing stranger than that our friend Mr. George should prove to be enormously rich," Mrs. Harper said laughing. "Nothing seems quite so strange to me as the possession of riches."

It was now Mrs. Simmons' turn to laugh as she said, "To a Methodist minister's wife—of course."

"Has Mr. George left his room today?"

"No. I took him some toast and coffee this morning. He looked terribly pale and worn. I invited him to eat supper with us for I am sure he will not feel able to get out today."

"I am glad you invited him to a good supper. Half the time when a man feels homeless and forsaken it is because his stomach is empty. For my contribution to his pleasure I will give him the lilacs I brought in. He likes flowers."

Mrs. Simmons brought a vase with water and Mrs. Harper gathered up the blossoms she had dropped on her lap and arranged them.

"Food is all right for empty stomachs and flowers touch a man's sentiment. But nothing, for a lonely man, takes the place of a wife. Mr. George needs a wife and

I've made up my mind to speak to him about it. He's a fine looking man for his age. He has lovely manners—when he has any at all. He wears good clothes and is always neat as a pin. He dyes his hair and moustache, to be sure, but that's nothing against his moral character, and there's many a woman would be glad to get him. Let's see if we can not find him a wife."

Plan making for this kind service to Mr. George was disturbed by the arrival of a neighbor, who with her baby came in to chat.

While the three women were visiting, they heard Mr. George coming.

His step was slow as he entered the room and his face pale and tired.

"If my presence is not an intrusion," he said bowing courteously, "may I sit with you? All the haunting memories of a man's past take advantage of him when he is on his back and with mocking roughness run over him. To hear the conversation of three good women will be little less than salvation."

"Three good women," Mrs. Simmons said laughing. "To be sure you are welcome. Sit down and talk with us."

As he crossed the room to a wide armed chair set for him, Mr. George paused, lifted his face slightly and drew in the air. Then he turned to the lilacs.

"White lilacs," he said, but he stepped back instead of toward them as he spoke. "White lilacs. If I die in lilac time and am not too far from you, will some of you ladies see that white lilacs are put somewhere near my coffin? It is imagination only, but a long time I have had the notion that with the perfume of white lilacs going with me, I can meet my Fate in the Unknown with sweet memories at least."

"Your request is granted," the ladies assured him.

"But you are not going to die, Mr. George. Lilac time has almost gone and you are better."

Without taking part in their conversation Mr. George seemed to enjoy being in the room. Especially was he pleased with the baby and his face lit with a smile that made him seem another man when the little one came to his knee.

"May I take you?" he asked as it lifted its blue eyes to his dark ones.

Holding up its hands the baby let itself be taken and after another look into the man's face, rested its golden head against his breast. With fingers timid in their first touch, Mr. George stroked the silky baby hair and when a little hand was raised toward his face, he almost held his breath. Would that dimpled hand touch him?

A soft pressure on his cheek almost as soft as the velvet touch of a butterfly's wing, answered his question.

He sat still and neither spoke nor cast his eye around the room. He was conscious the women were talking. They were not noticing him— and the tears that dropped on the golden hair over which he bowed his head, were not enough to let the child know.

It was only for a moment. Then with the changed notion of babyhood the little one scrambled down to run about again. Only a toddler, the child's feet tripped on a rug corner and the next moment it lay on the floor wailing.

Mr. George watched the mother take it in her arms, hug it to her bosom quiet its fear and kiss the bumped place and in the lull of conversation following the baby's tumble he said, "May I recite a few verses that come to me?"

The assurance that the recitation would give them pleasure was genuine on the part of all three women. They did not know it was to be a tearful pleasure.

After a moment's hesitation Mr. George arose and in

a manner such as none of his hearers had known words could be made expressive he said,

" 'Backward, turn backward O Time in your flight,
Make me child again, just for tonight
Mother, come back from the echoless shore
Take me again to your heart as of yore;
Kiss from my forehead the furrows of care;
Smooth the few silver threads out of my hair;
Over my slumbers, your loving watch keep—
Rock me to sleep, mother—rock me to sleep.
" 'Mother, dear mother, the years have been long
Since I last hushed to your lullaby song,
Many a summer the grass has grown green,
Blossomed and faded our faces between;
Yet with strong yearning and passionate pain
Long I today for your presence again
Come from the silence so long and so deep.
Rock me to sleep, mother—rock me to sleep.' "

There were no tears in the eyes of the man as he spoke. There was no tremor in his voice.

But the man himself seemed to be the voice of an eternal sob. He had not reached the second line when his voice was such a prayer for returned childhood that his hearers felt their heartstrings tugging and when in the third line he called his mother back from the echoless shores, the call was so vibrant with yearning and appeal, the mothers' hearts who heard it responded, as was evidenced by a rush of tears.

When he had finished Mr. George sat down. For a moment, only sobs were heard. Then Mrs. Simmons, giving her eyes a quick and definite brush with her handkerchief said, "Mr. George—there's just one reason for a man's saying a speech like that. He's lonesome and it's a sin for him to be alone and pitiful enough to make people shed tears when the world is full of good women—some of them maybe as lonesome as you are. We have talked it over and we all agree what you need is a wife."

Mr. George made no reply for a moment, then he said, somewhat wearily, "I thank you for your interest, but, in words spoken by another, yet for me, 'I, an old turtle will wing me to some withered bough; and there my mate, that's never to be found again, lament till I am lost' . . . 'Once I was as a tree whose boughs did bend with fruit; but in one night, a storm, or robbery, call it what you will, shook down my mellow hangings, nay, my leaves and left me bare to wither.' It is all past. Even its memory grows dim as water poured in water."

That same night Mr. George was taken critically ill again. Mrs. Simmons called her pot of coffee to her aid, but it did not prove effective.

Thinking, as did those about him, that the end of his mortal existence was at hand, Mr. George called Mrs. Harper to his bedside and to her, alone in the room, he said, "You perhaps have wondered about my past—who I am. Now that I am leaving it all, and must tell my secret to some one. I tell it to you.[2] To only one other human being has this secret been told—a man—my true friend of past years, Finis L. Bates. He is far away—too far to reach me in time. Hear my confession. I am John Wilkes Booth. I killed the best man that ever lived—Abraham Lincoln. 'So clean was he in his great office that his virtues plead like angels, trumpet tongued, against the deep damnation of his taking off.' But I only knew him when it was too late and now, though I should wet his grave with my repentant tears they could not undo the ills of one mad act."

"You—*you* killed Abraham Lincoln!"

The doubt in the woman's voice seemed to anger Mr. George.

"Yes," he replied emphatically. "I killed Abraham

[2] Mrs. E. C. Harper affidavit, Bates' collection.

Lincoln. You know who Abraham Lincoln was, do you not?"

"Yes—of course."

"And John Wilkes Booth?"

"Yes."

"I am that man. I tell you this because I *must*, and to clear the name of an innocent woman, Mary E. Surratt. When I am gone, tell my secret to the world. But until I am, do not divulge it or I will—I will—"

He paused. His eyes were unnaturally bright—his hands trembled.

"No I will not hurt you. There is a spirit that will not let me. But tell it, only after I am gone."

A physician came. In a few hours Mr. George was pronounced out of danger. A few days and he was able to be around.

Shortly after this Mr. and Mrs. Harper moved to Enid and Mr. George returned to the hotel to live.

It was the next December Mr. George decided to go to Enid, this decision having been determined by an announcement he saw in a daily paper that the Sanford Dodge Company was to play in that city. Mr. George had a peculiar fondness for the drama.

CHAPTER XXXVI

A LIVING DEAD MAN

THE leading lady in the show presented by the Sanford Dodge Company which Mr. David E. George had gone from El Reno to Enid to see, was Miss Blanche Booth.[1]

At a late hour, on the day of her night performance in Enid, as the actress was resting preparatory for her first appearance, a knock was heard at her door.

Responding, she opened the door into the dusky hotel hall, to see a strange man who said in a soft voice, "Blanche, do you want to see Johnnie?"

The question was a strange one and strangely asked. But an actress on the road becomes accustomed to strange questions from strange men and her answer was prompt and definite. After a long journey she was resting for the night performance and could not be disturbed.

The man handed her a card and silently turned away.

Throwing the card on the table, Miss Booth returned to her rest nor did she look at the card until a day later when she picked it up shortly before leaving the hotel.

The name on the card was "John Wilkes Booth."

* * * * *

The man who handed it to the woman was David E. George. From the dark hall he went down stairs onto the street.

The short winter day of late December was at an end. From the windows of stores and saloons, bars of light

[1] Affidavit made March, 29, 1922, by Miss Blanche Booth, daughter of Junius Brutus Booth, Jr., and niece of John Wilkes Booth. Original in Bates' collection. Referred to by permission of Mrs. F. L. Bates.

streamed onto the side walks and made little bright spots on the road side.

It was toward an all night saloon known as "Blondie's Hot Dog" where he had been a few times, that Mr. George directed his steps. This saloon had added a new piano to its bar and faro tables as an attraction. Perhaps there might be something of entertainment here for the lonesome man.

It interested him, on entering the place, to learn that a piano player from some eastern city had dropped in and would play on the new piano.

After taking a couple of drinks Mr. George found a wide armed chair in an unoccupied corner and sat down to spend the evening—perhaps stay until the lights were out.

He had planned a different evening. He had come to Enid to see the road show in which Miss Blanche Booth was leading lady.

But his reception at her door had taken the desire to see the show out of him. Indeed the momentary dismissal had taken all desire out of him. His presence at "Blondie's Hot Dog" was not due so much to desire to hear a piano played as to the impulse to drift—drift somewhere and this was the most inviting place.

For a time the man at the piano played popular airs and dances to the accompaniment of which there was drinking and laughing with now and then a couple of men doing a dance for the amusement of their fellows.

Among the boisterous men were a few quiet ones. Of these was a cowboy who had come in fresh from his horse with two companions. While they drank, he hung over the piano and at last must have told the player he could sing, for without any announcement the sound of a man's voice was heard in a melody that at once drew the attention of a number of the men.

Mr. George was one of these. He had never heard the song but if it had been written for him, the words could not more nearly have voiced the desire that ached in his heart:—

Take me back to home and mother
I am weary wandering here,
There can never be another
Spot on earth to me so dear.
Take me back to home and mother
For my heart is filled with pain
Take me back to home and mother
Only take me back again!
Take me back to home and mother
To the happy scenes of yore,
Friends of childhood, sisters, brothers,
Let them welcome me once more.
I can hear their voices ringing
In sweet memories' refrain
To the past my heart is clinging—
Only take me back again.

And then the refrain repeated with such an emphasis—such an appealing, drawn out, tender emphasis on the word "mother" which conveyed to Mr. George the heart feeling of the singer. The pleading of the cowboy's voice as often as he repeated the words, "only take me back again," was the longing of the older man's heart—a hopeless longing with him.

To shield his aching eyes from the light Mr. George had covered them with his hand when he sat down.

As the cowboy sang, the hand that shielded Mr. George's eyes was slowly lowered until it rested on his knee. The tanned face of the singer was the face of a hard man leading a hard life. But he was not all hard. Nor were the men gathered about him all hard for every man in the saloon was listening quietly before the song had reached its end.

Resting his head against the back of his chair Mr. George closed his eyes to shut out the scene. He was not a part of it.

After a moment of silence following the last words of the song, one of the other cowboys exclaimed half angrily, "My God! Buck, what do you pick out those old fashioned hymns for? Why don't you start something cheerful, something lively?"

"Something lively. All right. Come on all of you and we'll start something lively together. Come on—come on everybody!"

As the men gathered around the piano the speaker looked to the corner where Mr. George sat.

"That's old George," the bar-tender said.

"Don't look like a bum."

"Not yet, but he's on the bum road and no brakes to save him. He's drunk now. Let him alone."

"All right then. Come on—come on! I'm from Georgia where a man's blood is stirred till it tingles by the strains of Dixie! Everybody knows it. Open your mouths! Lift the roof—let 'er go!"

With a dash the piano player gave the first strains. A couple of lines of the verse was sung by the cowboy alone. Then one after another the men's voices united in singing until there was a rousing chorus with the patting of hands and feet and a shouting when the "Hooray!" was reached.

Like one in a dream the solitary man sat, for though the familiar song was being shouted almost in his ears, it seemed he had moved a vast distance from it.

When he had first heard and loved the war song of the Southland he did not try to remember. But there was one time he had heard it he could never forget and memory brought it with intense vividness to him just now.

After four years' bloodshed, peace had been declared and President Abraham Lincoln stood on a balcony to say a few words to a multitude of rejoicing people. How clearly his face could be seen in the light of a lamp held by a child. How distinctly his voice sounded when the cheering, which

had followed the band's spirited rendition of Dixie, had died away.

"Dixie is no longer the song of the South alone," the President said. "It is *our* song, for now, thank God, we are a reunited people."

With the coming of the words, which seemed to the man as clear as when he had heard them over thirty-six years before, there seemed to come also the Spirit of the man.

Could it be? Surely this was no place for the spirit of a just man made perfect! Mr. George lifted the heavy lids of his sleepless eyes and cast a glance about the bar room. The air was blue with smoke. The Spirit, he felt, would not tarry there. He would go with it.

As the singing came to an end, Mr. George left the saloon.

It was near midnight. The outside air was cold and a sharp wind struck him as he stepped onto the pavement.

As he stood in the chill, the sensation of having been in a dream left him and he had turned his steps in the direction of his hotel with the idea of doing some writing before he tried to sleep, when his ear caught the strains of more music and of a different kind.

He stopped and listened. As he did so he caught another refrain, a refrain that in years past had stirred his remembrance into joy and into the sorrow of regret.

It was the Strauss waltz of a long departed past—a dead past now with dead memories. He knew now it was dead for in the short time he listened he was unmoved by any thrill of joy, or pang of pain or sense of loss. He did not even desire more brandy. There was nothing sentient left of memory to be drowned in its comforting stupor. Nor was he uncomfortable in his dead feeling, nor had he any wish to throw it off.

Back at the hotel he was greeted by the clerk, Mr. Brown, who was on night duty.

Between Mr. George and Mr. Brown there had sprung up one of those quick acquaintances that at times seem to already exist because of an understanding two men have, each for the other. Mr. George finding a man to his liking in the clerk, had revealed a character not generally known, and the two men had spent many hours discussing topics of mutual interest from the prospects of certain mining operations to the precepts of Shakespeare.

"I've been down to 'Blondie's Saloon'," Mr. George said. "He has a new piano and there's been some lively music. Sleep has been chased far from me. I think I'll do a little writing if you'll furnish the paper."

"Help yourself," Mr. Brown replied pushing a pad of paper across his desk.

In his room with his writing material before him Mr. George wrote, "The Story of a Living Dead Man."

His eyes on the words he had written, he said, "Blanche Booth! She would not see 'Johnnie.' Do I blame her? No! . . . But let me write. How shall I begin? 'Three dead women and four dead men, and one man neither living nor dead—but both.' This shall be my story. I who write am that living dead man, dead while I live because it was I, on the threshold of whose heart door the bodies of these dead women lay, who caused them to be dead women. The one was hanged by the neck until dead. The one died of a broken heart—I broke it. The third is dead even as I am dead though she yet walks among men in her body.

"Four men, dead men, to my credit. The one I shot in the head. The three were hanged by the neck because I fired the shot—seven of them! Will this make a story?

" 'A Man without a Home'. This will be a chapter of my wanderings. Where all have I been? Across the States, and up and down the States I have wandered, sometimes doubling back over a restless trail. Here for a

while. There for a while. But no home! Across the waters I have been, and back, and around. But no home. At Mrs. Simmons' there was a motto—'Home, sweet Home.' It was a silent mockery to me.

"'A Man without a Name'. Shall I call my chapter title this, or 'Myriad Names'? It's all the same. How many? Can I count them? 'Boyd' it was when I, as a wanderer started out. To good old Sojer Willsin in the Tennessee Mountains I was 'Robert Jones'. I will not forget this name until I forget him. He believed my story from the bottom of his honest heart. In Arkansas at the Anthony House I was—who? Yes, I remember. I wrote 'Joe Vicks' on the entry book. In the Territory—was I 'Henry'—or 'Thomas' or both?

"The words of my name are dim, but there are words that never grow faint when I think of my days with the Indians. 'Telegraph office'. Damnable words! 'Jesse Smith'. The name sounds familiar—yes, I drove mules by that name. I was 'Richards' in China I remember and 'Gene Bertner' on the Islands where I went to write a book and met a —cuckoo. Names, names, swarms of them, 'Marr' and 'Edwards' and 'Dewit,' and 'Ryan'—and—more which do not come to me.

"Now I am George. Will I have another name? Perhaps this is my last. A few times only through the long years have I written to those who were friends of the days before I was killed in the barn. My Mother—blessed mother! I wrote her, not often, but whenever I landed for any length of time, I dropped her a line—from China—Cuba. And from Cuba I wrote a letter to Colonel Parker. I did not refer to Lincoln or Booth—sent my good friend an invitation to come to Cuba. He was one I could trust.[2]

[2] Letter from John W. Ray, Helena, Arkansas, published in *Memphis Commercial Appeal*, April 2, 1922, states he read letter above referred to.

" 'Tales about me.' In this chapter, which must be a long one if I tell all the tales I have read of the assassin Booth, there will be some curious reading. Some of the stories I have read have been true, some partly true, and some cut from whole cloth like the story that I was a preacher named Armstrong. I have been many kinds of a man, but never preached the gospel. The nearest I ever came to stealing the protection of the cloth was in Mexico where for a few days and with long penance to pay, I wore the holy habit of a priest.

" 'Dreams.' Shall I put in a chapter telling my dreams? Hair-raising would it be. The dream of the empty noose. My God! I shiver yet to think of it! The dream of the burden of my own dead body, Horrid! The dream of the bloody grass! It was worse! I heard a part of an exhorter's sermon. 'Thy brother's blood cries from the ground,' he shouted. I left his preaching place. But not soon enough. That night the dream came. Bare-footed, bare-legged I walked in a world of blood red grass, every blade of which was a living blood sucker. As I walked they sprang upon me—feeding—feeding—and never satisfied! And there was no end of them. Shall I put my dreams in my book?

" 'My Friends.' Few have they been, my friends, for always I have been afraid to make friends. Before I became a living dead man it was not so. I was free to make friends as I chose. In Baltimore an old man was my friend—a Union man. He was sorry I was a 'Secech,' but he liked me just the same—and I him. In New Orleans I had a yet stranger friendship with two Federal soldiers. Joe Zisgen[3] and Wilson Kenzie, their names were. I will

[3] Joe Zisgen (previously referred to in Kenzie affidavit) was one of the men at the Garrett barn who received a reward of $1,653.85 for the capture of Booth. The awards were not paid until after July 28, 1866, at which time Congress made an appropriation for the payment of a part of the original rewards offered.

not forget them. They belonged to an army stationed in New Orleans to help whip the South I loved. But they were good fellows. Their horses were good and we rode together like brothers. Friends—I must not leave little Sadie McDonald out of my story. A bright child she was. I could have loved her dearly. And she—she believed in me. She thought I was a good man. I am glad I made her happy back in those days. How children appreciate being remembered! I see her happy face yet as I gave her a box of candy I had brought from Cleburne.[4] I hope if she still lives her memory of me is half as pleasant as mine for her.

"She knew me as St. Helen. I left that name out of my incomplete list. How did I happen to forget it? I was known a long time by the name 'John St. Helen.' It was by this name, my friend—my one true friend, of all my dead years, Finis L. Bates, knew me. Such a pleasant friendship—such a secure friendship, for though I revealed to him my identity—he refused to believe. But the parting time came. He went East—I, West and the distance has not been covered between us since. I told him I was going to Leadville, I intended to. Instead I went to London to meet once more my mother. It was quite a family gathering.[5] My sister, Asia, and my brother, Edwin Booth, were there; my nephew, Winfield Clark, was with them, and my mother. I never saw her after that. Six years later she had gone the way of the 'Open Sea to God's Eternal Kingdom'—her words.

" 'The Spirit'—shall I tell of the Spirit in my story—the Spirit that has haunted me from the time the watchers

[4] This candy box, which was one of the treasures of her childhood, is today in possession of Sadie McDonald, now Mrs. J. D. Rylee, according to an affidavit which contains much matter of interest pertaining to John St. Helen. Reference made by permission of Mrs. F. L. Bates.

[5] See statement of Winfield Clark, nephew of John Wilkes Booth.

at his bedside said, 'Now he belongs to the ages,' even until now? I cannot. I know not how. I have not power to put sensation into words and to write a cheap ghost story of the Spirit of Abraham Lincoln—it is as impossible as for me to defame my sainted mother. Let mention of the Spirit remain as unknown to the readers of my story as the Spirit itself is.

"My book! Somewhere I have heard that the third trial at a hard task is the charmed effort. Twice before have I started writing. On the island I thought to write. The title of my story there was 'Under the Shadow of a Crime.' Not again did my sleeping desire to write my story awake into effort until I met the talented and charming Miss Varsey of Charley Stater's Company. It was to be a play for her, its title, 'Shadows of the Past'.[6] It came to naught. If this third effort fails—it is the last. How shall I begin it? To announce myself as the murderer of three women and four men—seven—is too horrible—too monstrous. My book will be cast aside as the raving fancy of a mad man. I will begin quietly—back at the old home—back where Blanche Booth spent two happy years in the days when 'Johnnie' had no dream that his flesh and blood kindred would ever have cause to turn him away in the dark. My God! Why did it have to be so? Why? Why?"

The question was not a question but a cry of despair and no answer was expected.

But the unexpected happened. There was an answer. With its coming the man with the pencil grew cold. The clammy, strange chill that he had before experienced crept upon him and with its coming seemed to remove him so far from his body that the beating of his heart was but shadow beating in a deserted form.

The pencil dropped from his fingers. He glanced about

[6] Campbell's "Wanderings of Booth," page 115.

the room—swiftly, eagerly, for he felt the pressure of the Spirit. But his vision was holden. He saw nothing.

The Voice answered his despairing question "Why? Why?"

Its answer, arising from the unsounded depths of the mystery of Being was "APRIL 14TH —1865."

Until his heart found its place and warmth returned to his body Mr. George sat motionless.

Then he lay both hands over his written sheets and slowly gathered them into the crushing grip of hands yet trembling.

"April 14th, 1865," he said with lifeless interest. "Fatal date on which for me all things ended."

CHAPTER XXXVII

"WHEN THE HURLEY BURLEY'S DONE"

It was not until after the man who had registered at the Grand Avenue Hotel as David E. George had taken his final leave of their hostelry, that Mr. Brown thought back to some of their night conversation when he was on duty and Mr. George could not sleep.

Several times their talk had turned to the subject of death and the hereafter. Mr. George had expressed a belief in the continued existence of the soul of man after its leave taking of the body and once had quoted from Julius Caesar with which he seemed to be familiar, the words of Cassius, "Nor stony tower, nor walls of beaten brass nor airless dungeon nor strong links of iron, can be retentive to the strength of spirit."

He remembered also a brief quotation used by Mr. George on a night when the subject of suicide had been brought up by a news story in a paper they were reading. "Every bound man in his own hand bears the power to cancel his captivity," he had said.

Just what he had meant Mr. Brown did not recall that Mr. George had explained.

From the night of his visit to Blondie's Hot Dog, Mr. George had not been well. His asthma had been worse, so bad at times he could hardly talk. His attacks of headache had been often and he had been drinking more than usual, probably as an antidote for the melancholia that always took possession of him at times of illness.

Much of the time he had stayed in his room. A few evenings when he had felt better he had visited with Mr. Brown down stairs.

At the beginning of a third week which promised no alleviation from his miserable condition of body and mind, Mr. George seemed to feel the sadness, the melancholy, the loneliness, the despondency he had for years suffered at times, gathering in and about him for a climax storm, of which he found himself strangely fearful.

On a small table behind which hung a mirror he placed a glass of stimulant.

Beside the table he sat down and from a little pile of papers took a picture that had been cut from a magazine or paper.

A long time he looked at the picture, that of a young man, shapely of figure, smooth cheeked and with uncreased brow framed in raven hair—a handsome man of the thoroughbred type and with an expression in his dark eye that seemed to say, "The world is mine."

From the picture, the man at the table raised his eyes to the mirror.

" 'Old George,' " he said, "nobody but 'Old George on the way to being a bum and no brakes to put on—poor old George!' "

There was no reply from the man in the mirror at which he gazed steadily for a short time.

Reaching his hand to the glass he lifted it to his lips. But he did not drink.

He put the glass back on the table and to the man whose face he looked into he said—"Yes—it is true. It is the sere, it is the yellow leaf! The furrowed cheek; the watery eye; the dry hand; the broken voice; the short breath; the frost upon the head—blasted and blighted youth! Old age is taking me. It finds me with no friends, no hope, no kindred to weep for me, almost no grave allowed me . . . 'There is no creature loves me and if I die, no soul will pity me. Nay, wherefore should they since I myself find in myself no pity for myself.' "

Again he lifted the glass to his lips, mechanically—and set it aside—and took his hand from it.

" 'Marked with a blot, damned in the book of heaven am I! There is so hot a summer in my bosom that my bowels crumble up to dust!'

" 'Death having preyed upon the outerparts leaves them insensible, and his siege is now against the mind, the which he pricks and wounds with many legions of strange fantasies.'

" ' 'Tis strange that death should sing, I am the cygnet to this pale fac'd swan who chants a doleful hymn to his own death and from the organ-pipe of frailty, sings his soul and body to their last resting place.'

" 'O God! O God! How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable seems to me all the uses of this world!'

"Welcome death—even though 'thy bones be marrowless, thy blood cold and thou hast no speculation in those eyes which thou dost glare with!' . . . 'O amiable, lovely death! That odoriferous stench! Sound rottenness! Arise forth from the couch of lasting night, thou hate and terror to posterity, and I will kiss thy detestible bones; and put eyeballs in thy vaulty brows, and ring these fingers thy house hold worms; and stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust and be a carrion monster like thyself! Come—grin on me; and I will think thou smils't, and buss thee as my wife! Misery's love, O come to me!' "

In his rapid excited speaking the rattling peculiar to his throat trouble had made the man's words almost impossible of utterance.

A third time his hand reached for the glass. This time he poured its contents eagerly into his throat.

He arose and looked again at the man in the mirror—the dishevelled hair, the dark, sunken eyes burning with excite-

ment, and as if the man who looked back into the face had made an accusation he cried, "'Mad? I am not mad. I would to heaven I were for then 'tis like I should forget myself. Oh if I could! What grief should I forget!'

"But not for me forgetfulness while in this flesh. Come death! 'To die is to be banished from myself.'"

As if the question were forever settled, the man sank upon the chair. As he did so he heard words—four words—measured—emphatic—final.

"It is not so."

"The Voice!" he exclaimed springing up. "I feel the Spirit near. Good Spirit of thy kindliness tell me, if death affords not banishment from myself, when will the base desires that have made me stain my soul deep crimson, let it be washed clean? Answer me! O answer!"

"When again touched, as surely they will be, by the better angels of our nature."

By the Voice out of the dead years the words of Abraham Lincoln had been brought to the man, fresh again as the day they were uttered.

"The better angels of *our* nature?" the man questioned. "Your nature, that of a just man—a Christ man—mine that of a murderer—and you say '*our* nature.'"

Mr. George stood as if he were talking to some one. He glanced about the room. It seemed perfectly empty.

But the impossible thought of seeming opposites being one, was not to go without the semblance of an answer though its meaning might be hard to analyze.

It was the Hindoo who made answer.

Once again the man of troubled brain and conscience seemed to see the bony finger of the seer pointing to the water's surface where the two waves played, the one freighted with its burden of offal and decay, the other

wearing a spotless ruffle of foam glistening in the sun like moving diamonds.

"Both are of the same sea. There is *one only whole*. All life is one life; beside this there is none other." The Hindoo had said it.

"Both will go back to the whole, one to be purified—one to help purify. 'Om, Mani, Padme, Om.' "

This also the Wise Man of the East had said, and following the soft voice of the translator, the man too had repeated—"The dewdrop slips into the Shining Sea."

"The Shining Sea—the Open Sea of God's Eternal Kingdom!"

Again it was the Voice—speaking his mother's words, this time as if the mother of blessed memory and the Hindoo were united in their speaking.

"The Spirit I know," the man cried. "In peace, not in torment it has come to me. But you—you Voice mysterious, you torment me with your very mystery. Tell me—who are you—or what—or where—or how?"

He listened. Would there be an answer?

Out of the immensity of Life itself it came.

"Nearer than hands or feet; closer than breathing; warmer than life blood; sweeter than the love of a chaste woman; damning as the wrath of the Almighty—all this I am! I am myself—thy other self—the self thou would'st have been and *yet must be* e'en though thy lower self shall make thy pathway ages long and strewn with dragon's teeth and scorpions."

"My other self," he repeated in a dazed way. "My other self; that which I would have been and *yet must be* though my lower self shall make my pathway ages long? O that I might be free from the body that these better angels could begin their work! Holy Mary! Mother of God! Send me deliverance from my dead self!"

With a groan the man sank again into his chair and bowed his head on the table.

How long he sat before he experienced the peculiar sensation of having his head gently raised that he might look again into the mirror, the man did not know.

When he turned his eyes to the mirror its shiny face seemed to be dimmed with a faint mist.

This passed immediately leaving a new and iridescent glow over the mirror into which came the outlines of the dim and distant shore of a sea too far and broad for human calculation. Beautiful it was beyond description. And as the bewildered man sat transfixed, a ship came sailing onto the sea—a ship with a solitary figure riding the prow—a tall figure with kindly face and in his deep-set eyes the light of recognition for the man watching it sail.

He saw now as he had felt it while riding the prow of the *Hattie Ann*—the Spirit of Abraham Lincoln.

A moment only the ship was clear on the mirror. Then like a curtain the first mist gathered—blotting out first the spirit of etheric majesty— then the boat.

After it had gone the impression came to the man's mind that there had been on the ship a form like that of a human body under a pall. Of this he was not sure. Nor did it matter.

With the coming and going of the ship there had come a surcease of his suffering.

He arose from the table. He passed his hand over the mirror. He looked into it—smoothed his hair, his moustache; adjusted his tie and went down stairs.

"Feeling better?" Mr. Brown asked as he came to his desk.

"A whole lot. I want to write some letters."

Material was furnished Mr. George. It was early yet and for an hour he wrote.

"There are three things in life worth while. Three things—a mother's love, the perfume of white lilacs, and the Spirit of a just man made perfect. And though I must yet go through more hell to make me fit, these wait for me in heaven."

This writing, addressed to nobody, was put in a plain envelope. On second thought it was destroyed. Another letter was finished, however, sealed, addressed and placed by Mr. George in his coat pocket.

When he handed his surplus writing material back to Mr. Brown he said, "'Tis but an hour ago since it was nine; and after an hour more 'twill be eleven. And so from hour to hour we ripe and ripe and then from hour to hour we rot and rot and thereby hangs a tale.'"

"What is the tale?"

"This—'When the hurly burley's done—
When the battle's lost and won—'"

"What then?"

"Ah, there's the rub."

The two men laughed and Mr. George left the hotel for a drug store on the next corner.

"Good evening, Mr. George, and what for you?" the clerk asked.

"You don't happen to have a bottle of lilac perfume do you?"

The clerk looked in the show case.

"Lilac perfume—just one."

"One is enough."

"What next?"

"Put me up some headache powders."

"Same kind?"

"Yes—the same."

"How many?"

"Enough to keep my head steady on a long trip."

"Going away?"

Mr. George lifted his face and after a pause said, "I'm thinking of it. There's been a voyage ahead of me for some time."

"Sea voyage?"

"Yes—by ship."

"Going to be gone for a long time?"

"If I go—yes."

"Coming back to Enid?"

"I do not know."

"Hope you will. Maybe you won't go."

"Maybe not."

With the two small packages in his pocket Mr. George went back to the hotel.

As he passed through the office he said to his friend Brown, " 'The long day's work is done and we must rest.' Good night."

CHAPTER XXXVIII

SENSATIONAL

Shortly before noon on the day following the evening Mr. George purchased the lilac perfume and the headache powders, as the porter of the Grand Avenue Hotel at Enid passed the door of Mr. George's room, he thought he heard a groan.

Stopping, he listened. He had not been mistaken. Again the groan as if every breath were one of agony.

The door was locked. The porter notified Mr. Brown, the clerk, who when he entered the room a few moments later found his guest almost past the stage of consciousness and suffering great pain.

For a moment there was recognition and in this moment the sufferer said, "Too much," and, "Doctor."

As Mr. Brown bent over the pillow in a first effort to arouse the suffering man to consciousness, he became aware of a delicate fragrance.

It was not blossom time. He glanced about the room. There were no flowers. Then his eyes turned to the table beside the bed and here he found an empty phial with a small gold band around it on which were the words, "White Lilac."

Bending over the pillow again the fragrance seemed to strike his nostrils sharply. He stepped back. Was the man suffering from the effects of too much perfume? He had never heard of such a thing.

He turned his eyes again to the table. Beside the glass bottle there was a little yellow box containing folded white papers marked "Headache Powders," with the word "Poison," in plain view.

"Too much," the sufferer had said.

When the hastily summoned physician had arrived and examined his patient Mr. Brown's first question was, "Do you think it is suicide?"

The physician looked at the powders.

"Has he been accustomed to taking these powders?"

"Yes. He has not been well since he came to our hotel. Several times he has had such violent headaches that he has been confined to his room and he drinks heavily at times. I have seen him use the powders."

A moment only the physician deliberated.

"If he had intended suicide he might have taken more. But whether intentional or not the man's death is certain unless he can be immediately relieved."

With such haste as is necessary to turn back the determined encroachment of death, the physician worked while Clerk Brown summoned Mr. Dumont, proprietor of the hotel.

By the time Mr. Dumont arrived the efforts of the physician seemed to be getting results. The pain was lessened and in the eyes of the restless head on the pillow there shone the light of consciousness.

A feeble motion of the lips told a desire to speak.

The three men listened for words—perhaps the last.

"I am—am—John Wilkes—Booth.[1] I killed—killed—Abraham—Lincoln—the best—best—"

A paroxysm of pain stopped the words.

"John Wilkes Booth," Mr. Dumont exclaimed. "The man is crazy, isn't he, Doctor?"

"Quite likely."

The pain passed. The dull eyes opened slowly. It was unlikely they could see. But the lips moved again. And again the three men listened intently.

[1] Affidavit of B. B. Brown and S. S. Dumont in Bates' collection.

"Two—two others know it—Mrs. Harper—Bates—they—know—"

Again breath was insufficient for a finish.

The light of consciousness faded from the dark eyes already veiled to the material world. The pain that followed was light—the groan faint.

"Mrs. Harper knows—Bates knows—" Mr. Dumont repeated.

"Poor fellow—*he* doesn't know," the physician said.

"Dying?"

"About gone."

In silence the three men stood listening to the last fitful breathing.

The lips moved again. They were forming a word. The eyes of the men watched the almost imperceptible opening of the lips—through which one whispered word came.

"Mother," Clerk Brown repeated.

"His last word," the physician said.

"Is he gone?"

"Gone."

"It's sweet here," Mr. Dumont said turning from the bedside. "Makes me think of a woman."

"And perhaps that's why he had it here," Mr. Brown said. "His pillow is damp with it. See—" and he held out the gold banded vial.

"White Lilac."

"Strange."

"He was a strange man. Back of him there was a past."

"Perhaps this fragrance has to do with some romance of that past—poor fellow. This too must ever remain a secret."

"If so, the secret, whatever it might have meant in times past, seems to be having a happy effect on him now. See how the pain lines are smoothing out. He looks quite comfortable, almost pleased about something."

"It is often so," the physician said. "There seems to be some mysterious healing and peace bringing power with death."

"Have you noticed his hands?" Dumont asked.

"Yes, well shapen."

"I mean have you noticed the way he holds them? Rather odd—as a child gets them together when saying its prayers."

"Does look like it. And had you noticed his eye brows are not mates? Look at the right one."

The physician glanced at the indicated eye brow and said carelessly, "A scar likely, cut maybe, or shot long ago."

"He was pretty friendly with you," Mr. Dumont said to Brown. "Has he any relatives—do you know?"

"He told me once he was alone. I was touched by the way he spoke. But he has an acquaintance or two in town—a Mrs. Harper. He knew her in El Reno. She called once when he was sick."

"Harper! That's the name of one of the two 'who knows,'" the physician said.

"Knows what?—Oh yes—that this dead man is John Wilkes Booth."

It was Mr. Dumont who spoke.

"It's funny what notions dying men take," the physician observed, "but the claim of being the assassin of Abraham Lincoln, the dying desire to be known as a murderer who was shot over a quarter of a century ago—this beats any dying fancy I have ever run across."

"Let us get in touch with Mrs. Harper," was Mr. Brown's suggestion. "This man's past—what is it? Perhaps she really does know something of him."

* * * * *

"Poor Mr. George," Mrs. Harper said wiping her eyes as she stood beside his still body. "Yes, I knew him."

"With his dying breath he made a strange statement the truth of which he said you knew."

"What was it?" and there was interest in the question.

"He said he was John Wilkes Booth, the assassin of Abraham Lincoln. Had he told you this?"

"Yes, some time ago when he was very sick, when we were living in the same house. He had spells of despondency, and fierce headaches. At such times he took headache powders. I think this time he had taken an overdose. He was terribly alarmed and sure he was going to die. Holding to my hand and looking me through and through with his wonderful dark eyes he told me he wanted to make a confession. He said he had killed the best man that ever lived—that he was John Wilkes Booth the assassin of Abraham Lincoln. The statement was so strange—so shocking it was past belief though he gave me evidence that he was speaking the truth."

"Was he out of his head—crazy?"

"Not a bit. I am sure of this."

"But why should a sane man who had escaped the penalty of so terrible a crime during a lifetime fasten on himself a murderer's brand at death?"

"I asked myself that question. And yet I felt I understood when he said his confession was to clear the name of Mary E. Surratt who had no part in nor knowledge of the murder of President Lincoln."

"Did he tell you he had ever made this confession to any other than yourself?"

"Yes. Years before he had told his life secret to a man who was not only a very dear friend but his legal advisor. To him he had given ample and positive proof of his identity. He was living somewhere in Texas."

"Do you know what that man's name was?"

"Bates."

Mr. Brown took a sealed letter from his pocket addressed to Finis L. Bates at Memphis, Tenn. He handed it to Mrs. Harper.

"Is this the man?"

"Bates—Memphis, Tenn. That is where he lived."

"And he has proof that this man George is John Wilkes Booth?"

"So Mr. George told me."

"I will wire this friend and law counselor. Perhaps something interesting will develop."

CHAPTER XXXIX

"CHARITY FOR ALL"

MEANTIME without benefit of the physician's charitable doubt, word was passed from mouth to mouth that there had been a suicide at the Grand Avenue Hotel. This was enough to cause live comment. But when the news gained publicity that this suicide had confessed with his dying breath that he was none other than John Wilkes Booth, slayer of Abraham Lincoln, public interest flamed up with the promptness that a match kindles fire in a tinder box.

As if the information had been broadcasted on magic wings it spread from street to home and to the country at large when the *Enid Wave* sent out its first story stating that the suicide, David E. George, had announced himself on his death bed as the assassin of Abraham Lincoln.

Surgeons examined the body and stated the man to be the age Booth would be at this time and that there were marks on the leg which must at some time have caused lameness.

Newspaper comment varied in opinion. One believed the evidence sufficient to prove that George was in fact, the murderer he claimed to be. Another admitted that if George was not Booth he was his double, but since Booth was killed in the Garrett barn—he could not die a second time.

Two doctors unearthed a medical journal containing a detailed anatomical description of John Wilkes Booth together with his picture. The George body was examined and proved to be the same in every particular.

The *Wave* made special effort to corroborate or disprove the story that was the sole topic of discussion. It

said "*The Wave* has been searching for a fac-simile of Booth's handwriting. It was found today in a copy of 'Harper Brothers' Pictorial History of the Civil War' and we were startled when we compared it with the round little scrawly boy writing of D. E. George. We placed the very last words George wrote by the side of the fac-simile writing of Booth and it really seemed to us that one and the same man had written both. Booth's fac-simile signature shown in 'Harper's Pictorial History' indicated the same irregular handwriting as George's."

The Perry, *Oklahoma Republican* in one of its stories said, "It is now fully developed that the man at Enid who committed suicide on January 13th last was none other than John Wilkes Booth the slayer of President Lincoln. Junius Brutus Booth, the nephew of John Wilkes Booth has fully identified the picture of David E. George as that of his uncle John Wilkes Booth . . . It has always been known by the Booth family that John Wilkes Booth was alive and they have been in constant communication with him ever since April 14, 1865, the day of President Lincoln's assassination and the escape of John Wilkes Booth. This knowledge on the part of Junius Brutus Booth the actor, has prompted him or his brother Edwin to make remarks about the supposed grave of J. Wilkes Booth. They well knew the body in the grave was not that of J. Wilkes Booth."

While the discussion raged and the cross fire of opinion was rapid the city was filling up with people and the excitement could hardly be repressed. By the second day after the public announcement that the body of John Wilkes Booth was in the city of Enid, the public square had been worn perfectly smooth by the pressing of many feet. Having overflowed its bounds, a great camp of covered wagons and other vehicles which had brought people from all directions, was made outside the city. Horses were hobbled on

the commons and camp fires sent their pale blue spirals up through the leafless trees.

Among the gathered thousands Federal soldiers were in plentiful evidence eager for the excitement of wreaking vengeance on the body of John Wilkes Booth if it should be proven that he had in fact escaped Federal soldiers who claimed, years before, to have shot him in the barn for the unforgivable crime of killing President Lincoln.

Discussion never ended and though plans had been made for the wreckage of the body, they were told and retold, the time for action depended on the arrival of the man Bates who was to identify it.

For several days the train from the east was greeted by hundreds of eager and intense men but nobody by the name of Bates came in though Mr. Brown was watching for him.

But among the guests at the Grand Avenue Hotel just at this time was a Charles O'Connor of New York who sold mattresses. The undertaker in whose morgue the body suspected of being that of John Wilkes Booth lay at rest, was also a furniture dealer and on this undertaker Charles O'Connor called.

He was invited into the office of the undertaker and asked to wait a few minutes until his prospective purchaser of mattresses should have time to talk with him.

After a few moments of waiting the undertaker was ready to talk with Charles O'Connor. Through a back door the two entered the room where the body awaited identification.

"Here he is, Mr. Bates," the undertaker said, his eyes intently watching the face of the man who might have been the friend of this mysterious dead.

The look of recognition in the eye of the incognito mattress salesman was instantaneous; with it the expression

curious anxiety that had marked his face softened into an expression of pity akin to love.

"My God! St. Helen—is it possible?" he exclaimed in a choking voice.

Then the tears came—tears that flowed as freely for the moment as a brother's for a brother.

"It is him then," the undertaker said. "It is John Wilkes Booth?"

"It is John St. Helen who claimed to be John Wilkes Booth, none other."

"You have full evidence?"

"Beyond a doubt. Years ago, when he thought he was on his death bed, he told me as a friend and legal advisor his great secret and furnished me with such proof as the most careful lawyer could not refuse as evidence. There is the photograph of John Wilkes Booth taken at the time of the assassination. There is another taken ten years later at Glen Rose Mills. They are of the same man. His knowledge of the escape of Booth is too minute in detail and too much in accordance with known acts to doubt. Besides the many other proofs of his identity with John Wilkes Booth there are his body scars.

"Perhaps you wonder at my emotion over the body of an assassin. But to me he never seemed such. After the story was once told, it was never referred to again and came to seem unreal to me. Even had his identity as a criminal made more of an impression on me, there was so much that was good and noble and promising about him together with bad and the ties of our friendship came to be so close, I would have spread the mantle of charity over his dark past, since the law had been satisfied—a life had been paid for the life he had taken."

"The law—yes—but what about the people? A half hour on the streets of Enid will be enough to let you know

the spirit of the mob awaits only the identification of this body by Mr. Bates to wreak high handed vengeance.''

''Mr. Bates will not identify the body for the public.''

Shortly after his visit to the morgue the mattress salesman, Charles O'Connor stood on a corner near the Public Square watching the people that thronged the streets and congregated in groups to discuss the one important topic—would Bates recognize the body in the morgue?

He had not noticed an unbent but aged man standing beside him who was also studying the crowd, until the words, ''Say, mister,'' sounded in his ear.

''You don't reckon that man Bates has got in yit do ye?'' he asked as Charles O'Connor turned to him. ''I'm powerful anxious to see him. I've got fifty dollars in my jeans to slip into his hand if he'll git me into see this feller they say is John Wilkes Booth what killed Abe Lincoln—fifty dollars,'' and from the depths of his pocket he drew a roll of green backs.

''You haven't seen the body?''

''Lord no. I've been to that buryin' shop three times tellin' them fellers if the brands is on him like it was printed in the papers, I can tell 'em who he is. And three times they've told me they wasn't lettin' nobody in 'till this man Bates gits here. I allow if I can git in touch with Bates, this fifty'll git me in, and it'll be worth it.''

''You know this man, do you?''

''How kin I tell when I haven't set eyes on him yit?''

''Of course—I mean you have reasons for thinking you know him.''

''Yep—them brands—one over his eye—right eye brow pooched up like a busted barrel hoop; right thumb also crippled fer life by them damn rebels.''

''You have the marks all right—that is, according to the papers.''

''You're shoutin' right I've got the marks. I recol-

lect as well as if it was yestiddy when I told him I'd got his brand. He was jest startin' away to the West. I told him them brands was on his body fer life, same as old cattle carry brands they got when they was yearlin's. And I told him if I ever see him again, though his hair was grizzled and his back bowed I'd know him. That was a long time ago. My teeth is gone to grass sence then and rheumatics has made one leg stiff as a poker—but, by God, my eyes is good as an eagle's yit and I want to see this here dead man they say is Booth."

"Where do you live?"

"Has that got anything to do with my eyesight?"

"No, but I was wondering where you knew this man."

"I've been living with a son in this Territory for the past ten years. But it was when I lived back in Tennessee mountains I knew the man branded like I'm tellin' you."

"Back in Tennessee—and when?"

"Just after the War. Just at the time they caught and killed Abe Lincoln's murderer that some fools don't think is dead yit unless this man is him. I recollect because my man read how they caught Booth—a whole page of it. And when it come to readin'—Wal, I haint never heard nothin' like it. I don't reckon God could beat him at readin'. He was about petered out when he got to my place. Hadn't been long out of a hospital with a wounded leg them damned rebels give him."

"Had you known him before he came to your house that day?"

"Hadn't never seen him. But the Creator never put eyes like his in no dishonest head. He was what he said he was."

"You want to see him—the man in the morgue?"

"Yep—I'm thinkin' I kin identify him and save that man Bates the trouble."

"I happen to know the undertaker. I think I can get you in. Come."

Again Charles O'Connor with the undertaker stood beside the casket of the silent body of the man whose passing, because of his last words, had created so widespread a sensation.

This time the aged mountaineer stood with them, his keen blue eyes on the body which seemed to be quietly sleeping.

For a moment he stood in silent contemplation. Bending over the coffin he said, "It's you, sonny, and 'taint nobody else. I knew them damn rebels had branded you till the day you was put in your coffin. Your black hair aint black no more, sonny, nor your face like no pale boy's, nor your eyes can't look at me and say, 'They mighty near did me up, but you're my friend, aint ye?' Nor your hand with its crippled thumb can't shake its thanks no more. No sonny—you don't look like you did—but it's you—it's *you!*"

Turning to the men who were watching him closely, he said to the undertaker, "This here aint no more Booth than you are. Nor this man's name aint George neither. This here is Robert Jones, as loyal a soldier boy as ever put on a blue coat to help Abe Lincoln save the Union. And I reckon if the truth was known he didn't raise his own hand against his own life neither. Outside the streets is full of worked-up men, waitin' fer this feller Bates to say this is Booth. The minute he does they've got the stake ready fer the biggest human burnin' ever was seen and what's left of his poor carcass is goin' to be hacked to pieces. Don't let it be so. I don't know this Bates and don't stand no chance of seein' him—but you—say tell him this here body's already been accounted fer. Tell him to save the remains of what was once a man from that mob."

"I am sure Mr. Bates will do that."

"Shake," and the mountaineer extended his large knuckled hand.

When he had clasped hands with the undertaker he turned to Charles O'Connor and said, "Thanks to you, mister, fer gettin' me in here. I don't know who you be but you got a good heart an' if you think Bates will take half my fifty you can have the other half. It's all I got or I'd give you each fifty. It's worth it to me."

The money was refused and the mountaineer had turned to leave when he hesitated and stopped for another word.

"You fellers that looks after the dead—you believe spooks is scriptural, don't you?"

"Spooks is scriptural?"

"Yep—you believe in ghosts and sperrits and all such."

"I've never seen one."

"'Taint no argument agin them if you haint. There's a heap of things around most folks don't see nor hear. What I'm gettin' at is this—you don't believe the breath of God what he breathed into human critters when they became livin' souls dies, when these here poor old carcasses of ourn is laid aside, do you?"

"You are asking if I believe in immortality?"

"Maybe that's what you call it. But according to the Scriptures that part what don't die is called angels and sperrits and ghosts and they come back and walk amongst men. Now I calculate that next to the Holy Ghost of Scriptures, the biggest, finest sperrit that walks among men is the sperrit of Abe Lincoln and it's dollars to doughnuts with all the racket that's been raised about this here Robert Jones bein' the man that killed him, he's close here somewhere. Maybe he's here beside this coffin lookin' with his kind eyes at this poor dead brother of ourn right now. Who knows? If he is, he wouldn't want what's left here turned over to that mob. More, I calculate, gentlemen, Abe Lincoln wouldn't want this here poor old suffered-out

body hooted at and spit on and jabbed and kicked and burned if he *knew* it was his murderer. My calculation is based on the sort of religion Abe Lincoln lived and died by. Didn't take no long-winded sermon to tell it neither. Three little words was all honest Abe needed. Them three words was, 'Charity fer *all!*' an' Abe Lincoln's *all* was *all*—dead as well as livin' I take it."

Charles O'Connor had turned to the coffin. His back only was visible to the old mountaineer who addressed his parting remark to the undertaker.

"I'm leavin' ye now. Give this feller Bates Abe Lincoln's message. An' don't fergit the words. There's only three an' you can't git far off the track if you remember the first is 'Charity' and the last is 'all'."

THE END